



# The Story of the Congregational Church of Northfield, Massachusetts

Prepared for the 150th Anniversary of  
the Organization of the Northfield  
Trinitarian Congregational Church

1825-1975

By  
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*Pen and ink sketch of the Trinitarian Congregational Church by  
Douglas A. Jones, after the addition of Fellowship Hall and the  
lower Church School rooms. (1965)*

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## INTRODUCTION

The year 1975 marks the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the Northfield Trinitarian Society, though the church itself traces its ancestry back to 1673 to the pioneer church of the first settlers. For nearly a century and a half the people of Northfield worshipped in one church, but in 1825 the congregation was divided by irreconcilable theological differences. The majority turned toward Unitarianism; the minority, who could not accept this new doctrine, withdrew and organized another church, the Trinitarian Congregational. They did not think of this as a new church, but as a continuation of the original church established by the pioneer settlers of the town. Therefore, the history of the Northfield Congregational Church needs to be considered in two parts; the story of the church of the pioneers from 1673 to 1825, and the story of the Trinitarian Congregational Church, which in 1825 left the building but continued the doctrines and practices of the parent church.

To understand the spirit of that early church we need to be aware of the background of the settlers of Northfield. They inherited the religious beliefs and practices of their forebears who had left England because they could no longer endure the unscriptural restrictions and ceremonies, and the worldly actions of many in the state church. The Puritans came to America and endured incredible dangers and hardships in order to establish communities in which they could worship God in ways of their own choosing. They were not easily discouraged, as William Brewster said:

*It is not with us as with other men, whom small things can discourage or small discontentments cause to wish themselves home again. . . . We verily believe and trust that the Lord is with us. . . and that He will graciously prosper our endeavors.*

This was the spirit of the devout and courageous men and women who established the first English settlements in New England. Everywhere they went, one of their first acts was to organize a church, usually Congregational in form, each local church being an autonomous body, recognizing no outside religious authority. They did not want anyone to tell them how to worship, but they doubtless approved of various legislative attempts to encourage religion in the colonies. In 1636 the Massachusetts General Court enacted a law stating that

*Noe person shall be admitted to the freedom of this commonwealthe unless he be a member of an approved church.*

And in 1646 a law was passed requiring everyone to attend the preaching services in his town church. In 1669 the Governor and Council of Massachusetts sent circulars to all ministers in the Colony urging them to reach out to all people, not just to church members, instructing them in the Gospel and guiding them, not only in public services, but privately in house to house visitation.

*The effectual and constant prosecution hereof we hope will have a tendency to promote the Salvation of Souls, to suppress the growth of Sin and Prophaneness, to beget more love and unity among the people and more Reverence and Esteem of the Ministry, and will assuredly be the enlargement of your Crown and Recompense in Eternal Glory.*

The founders of Northfield shared fully in the fervent religious spirit of most of the early settlers in New England. They ventured into the unknown wilderness with the stated purpose of establishing another "Puritan Outpost". When, on their first Sunday in their new home they gathered together for a service of worship, the history of both the Trinitarian and Unitarian Churches of Northfield began.

In the history of any church, the most important thing is not dates, or buildings, or finances; not even creed or ritual, but people. They tell the story of the church by the lives that they live. Therefore, in this story of the Congregational Church in Northfield I have emphasized the human side of the story, selecting from the records the items that portray the spirit of those who established and maintained the church with piety, dedication, and a strong spirit of service, noting, too, some instances of human weakness and folly.

Carl C. Compton



PART ONE  
The Church of the Pioneers  
(The Parent Church)  
1673–1825

I. Establishing a “Puritan Outpost” in Northfield (1673–1717)

Among the early settlers of Northampton and Hadley were devout and adventurous families who, for both economic and religious reasons, felt the urge to push further out into the wilderness to establish a settlement of their own. Scouting expeditions brought back thrilling tales of a beautiful place a short distance up the Connecticut River, with wooded hills encircling fertile meadows, and with streams filled with salmon. The abundance of salmon gave rise to the legend that the name of the local Indians, “Squakheags”, was a contraction of an Indian phrase meaning “Spearing Place for Salmon”. However, Dr. Gordon Day, an authority on New England Indians, says this is not correct and that the true meaning of Squakheag is “Those Who Broke Away”. How they acquired this name is not known, but it is known that they were a minority group who probably favored a white settlement in their midst as a means of protection against hostile tribes.

The fact that the Indians in this fertile valley were friendly and willing to sell some of their land seemed to be an answer to the prayers of the restless settlers. Here was a place where they could both better their own condition and also “promote Christ’s Kingdom” by establishing another Christian community. After much discussion and many prayers, in 1671 thirty-three persons signed the following petition to the General Court of Massachusetts:

*Right Honorable and much Honored; We conceive there is a great duty incumbent upon all that fear God, to consider project and endeavor how they may promote Christ’s Kingdom in order to posterity; but finding ourselves in a great measure straightened and not in a capacity to attend that great work and duty unless we remove to some other place, which does occasion us to make our humble address to this Honorable Assembly. The place that our eyes are upon (though it be uncouth remote and we conceive attended with many difficulties) yet seeing God in His providence has caused the Indians to desert these places. . . . and it is reported they are resolved to sell the same. . .*

*Right Honorable and much Honored; We are loath to be tedious in multiplying arguments, but desire to be as compendious as may be to signify our humble desires to your worships, that we may have liberty and encouragement to purchase a Plantation.*

The petitioners looked upon their proposed enterprise as a missionary as well as a business venture, and it was so regarded by the General Court. The permission, granted on May 15, 1672, stated that the settlers must:

*Procure them a godly and orthodox minister. . . . (and) there shall be a convenient lot laid out for a minister, both a home lot and a meadow.*

And a later confirming document reiterated the religious nature of the enterprise by stating that the permission was granted on the condition that:

*the persons that engage to erect this village take due care to provide and maintain the preaching of the word and the ordinances of God in their midst.*

The settlers in Northfield were in full accord with these instructions, and from the first days of the first settlement the church played an important role in the life and development of the town. On the first Saturday evening, a few days after the handful of pioneers had made camp on the site of their future town, the weary settlers laid down their tools and prepared for the Sabbath Day of rest and worship. On Sunday morning they gathered for the first public service of worship in Northfield under the spreading branches of an oak tree. Many years later, at a dedication of historic markers, Edith



Callender paid this tribute to the town's first place of worship:

*... a temple ... whose arches fair  
As the slow years expand  
Were wrought and lifted in the still blue air  
By God's Almighty hand.*

The settlers had not been able to find an ordained minister to come with them, but they were fortunate in having strong lay leadership. At their first service of worship "the learned William Janes, schooled in the scripture, practiced in pious teaching, read the Old Testament story of another pilgrimage into a promised land". During the short life of the first settlement, Elder Janes continued to serve as lay preacher, and did his best to keep up the settlers' courage during those dangerous and difficult days. Hostile Indian bands were on the warpath in such numbers that death and captivity were a constant threat. Finally, after two years of struggle, it was decided that the settlement must be abandoned, and in September, 1675, the settlers loaded their meager possessions onto their ox carts, left their crude homes and newly cleared fields, and sadly made their way back down the valley.

In spite of the greater safety in the more settled area, they never waived in their determination to return to Northfield, but they had to wait ten years before it seemed safe to do so. By the summer of 1685 all seemed quiet in the Connecticut River Valley, and the first group of Northfielders returned to find fields overgrown and nothing left of homes and stockades but scattered stones and a few charred timbers. Once again they began the arduous task of building homes and clearing fields in the wilderness. Even before they had roofs over their heads or were assured of their daily bread, they began to think of a church. One of the early town meetings voted a levy of forty pounds and five shillings for building the first two town structures, a church and a bridge. According to Cornelius, the town's one Irishman, they were going to build two bridges, "one to the upper end of town, and the other to heaven". And though no minister was on hand or in sight, in the assignment of land, they carefully set aside a tract for a minister.

In addition to the usual difficulties of pioneering, troubles with the Indians began again, and the town voted that for "spiritual defense" they must have a minister without further delay. The Reverend Warham Mather of the famous family of Puritan ministers agreed to come for six months, for which service Governor Andros promised that the Colony would pay him fifteen pounds. But spiritual defense alone could not protect them from the increasingly aggressive Indians, and as sufficient soldiers could not be provided for military defense, on June 25, 1690, the County Court in Northampton decided that the settlement must be closed. The inhabitants were ordered to return to the parent town within eight days, and to bring with them their pigs, horses and cattle.

Nearly a quarter of a century was to elapse before peace seemed sufficiently secure for the settlers to return to Northfield. In 1713 the General Court renewed the permission for the settlement, and again specified that the settlers must "secure and encourage a learned and orthodox minister to settle among them".

The following spring, the children and grandchildren of the first settlers made their way back up the valley, this time never to be driven out. They found almost no trace of their former town, and had to begin again from the very beginning. Few in number, only a dozen or so families, they were sturdy and self-reliant, determined that they would not again abandon their farms and homes. They were also a devout group, never wavering in their intention to have a church-centered town. But for nearly two years they were without a minister, living as Captain Benjamin Wright reminded them, "too nearly like heathen, having no minister of the gospel".

Finally word came from Northampton that a minister had been found, and that a house should be built for his accommodation. This was speedily accomplished, as the so-called house was a very modest affair, a simple hut, sixteen feet long and twelve feet



wide, built near the house where the minister would take his meals. The minister was the Reverend James Whitmore, not yet twenty-one years of age, with an A.B. degree from Yale. He was engaged for a period of six months, for which he was to be paid twenty-five pounds, in addition to subsistence for himself and his horse. He had his hut in which to live, and a similar hut within the stockade served as a temporary church. The latter was rarely used, for in good weather services were held out of doors, and in bad weather in whichever of the new houses had the largest room. Mr. Whitmore served out his six months, and then left, apparently with no regret on either side. He was too young and inexperienced to take a place of leadership in the community, and his churchly attitude resembled too closely the formalities the pioneers had fled England to escape.

By this time, the little settlement was firmly established, with no question as to its permanence. Thus far, the church had not played the significant role the settlers had envisaged, but this was soon to change. Mr. Whitmore was followed by Benjamin Doolittle, the first of three remarkable ministers who together served Northfield for one hundred and eighty years and left an indelible imprint on both the church and the community.

## II. Benjamin Doolittle's Thirty-two Year Pastorate. 1717–1750

In 1717 Northfield was still a very small community, but one with a growing feeling of confidence and security. Sure that they were now firmly established, the settlers made finding a permanent minister a matter of top priority. The Mattoon family recommended another Yale graduate, the Reverend Benjamin Doolittle, grandson of one of the highly respected original settlers of New Haven. He was only twenty-two years old and inexperienced, but he was well educated in both theology and medicine, and was said to be in full sympathy with the simple, unadorned faith of the pioneers. There were some misgivings about his youth, but after a few months on a trial basis, the people were satisfied they had found the man they wanted. Mr. Doolittle liked what he had seen of the community, and when town meeting invited him to accept a call as permanent minister, he immediately agreed.

His salary was to be thirty-three and a third pounds for the first year, fifty-five pounds for each of the next six years, and seventy-five pounds annually beyond that time. The town also agreed to provide a house and ten acres of land for tilling, ten acres of pasture land, fifty acres of swamp land, and

*Such stock of wood as the state and circumstance of his family shall require for six years coming, and after the expiration of said six years, that each man with his team shall cart or sled wood one day yearly for Mr. Doolittle. (Temple and Sheldon, p. 148)*

Providing wood for the pastor seems to have been a matter of considerable importance, as it was often an item of business at town meetings. In March, 1719, the original agreement was changed, and a committee was authorized to pay seven pounds, fifteen shillings for cutting and hauling sixty-two loads of wood for the pastor. Still later, the business was left in the hands of a town wood committee.

Another fringe benefit for the minister was the assignment by the town of two guards for his house, one by day and one by night. To raise the money to pay Mr. Doolittle's salary, the town voted its first tax levy; six shillings poll tax, twelve pence per acre on meadow lands, and six pence per acre on upland areas. The General Court of Massachusetts also voted forty pounds to assist the town in providing for its minister.

Mr. Doolittle brought with him his young bride, and it was obvious that a sixteen by twelve foot hut was not a fit residence for a minister and his wife. A tragic accident solved the housing problem. Just at that time, one of the town's fine young men, Lieutenant Thomas Taylor, a veteran of the battle at Deerfield, was drowned in the Connecticut River. He had one of Northfield's better houses, and this was first rented



from his widow, and later purchased as a parsonage. Here Mr. Doolittle and his family lived till he died thirty-two years later.

With a permanent minister installed, and a growing congregation, town meeting voted to build a permanent meeting house, to be located in the middle of the street in the center of the town. Construction was started in late March, 1718, and the building was ready for use in August. It was forty-five feet long by thirty feet wide, with a rough board pulpit and backless wooden slabs for seats. When the new meeting house was ready for occupancy, a new town officer was appointed, the tithing man. His duties were to:

*Inspect the conduct of liquor sellers, Sabbath breakers, night walkers, tipplers, and to keep order in the meeting house during Sabbath services. (Mitchell, p. 674)*

Now the people of Northfield had achieved their dream of a church-centered town. To keep out irreligious people, or those of different beliefs, one of the early town regulations specified that no one would be allowed to settle in the town without the approval of a majority of the present inhabitants. And once admitted as a legal member of the town, a newcomer automatically became a member of the church. For all practical purposes, town and church were one organization. Church matters were decided by town meeting, not by ecclesiastical authorities. Town meeting levied taxes to pay church expenses, chose the minister and paid his salary, set the time for church services, assigned the pews, and took care of even minor details of church business. In 1729 the town voted that the inhabitants would be called to church services by the beating of a drum, for which service the town would pay Eleazor Holton one pound ten shillings per year. This practice was discontinued two years later when the town voted to hire a man to hang out a flag to announce the time of church meeting. During one brief period, the town arranged for the time of church service to be signaled by the firing of a gun.

In both church and town, Mr. Doolittle soon became an outstanding leader. He was an unusual combination, an inspiring preacher, an active community leader, and strangest of all, a skilled physician and surgeon. Not the least of his contributions was the intellectual stimulus he provided for many a young man. It was his instruction and inspiration which led young Seth Field to go to Yale and become the first Northfield boy to acquire a college degree. Seth then returned as a teacher, and few men contributed more to determining the kind of town Northfield was to become.

For the first seventeen years of his pastorate Mr. Doolittle was highly successful and was almost universally liked and admired. But then dissension arose. Some felt he was giving too much time to his medical practice. Outside of Northfield he was better known as a surgeon than as a preacher, and he built up a large and lucrative practice extending from Charlestown on the north to Springfield on the south. This caused hard feelings on the part of those who were much less well off and who were taxed to pay Mr. Doolittle's salary as a preacher.

At the same time, even more heated divisions were caused by disputes over religious doctrines. The so-called "Great Awakening" under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards in Northampton was sweeping over the Connecticut River Valley. Emotions were so aroused that meetings were filled with cries, swoonings, and convulsions. In Northampton religious fervor reached such an intensity that business was almost brought to a standstill. Though Mr. Edwards frowned on emotional extremes, he did believe in stirring emotions, and he became New England's best known preacher of "fire and brimstone". His most famous and most terrifying sermon was entitled "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God". In one of his many pamphlets he advocated preaching terror even to little children, who, in his eyes were "young vipers in God's sight unless Christ's".

The Great Awakening spread into Northfield and found ardent followers among some of Mr. Doolittle's parishoners. He and the majority of the congregation were too liberal to accept Mr. Edwards' theology, and a bitter controversy arose, each side defending its position with great passion. Among other things, the dissenters accused their pastor of



heresy because he would not accept the doctrine of predestination and believed that it was possible for a man to resist the divine will and fall from grace because of his own misdeeds.

The town seemed hopelessly divided, and the dispute was referred to a meeting of the Hampshire Association held in Northfield, May 3, 1739. After long discussion the Association recommended that the two parties “engage in calm conversation in a spirit of mutual respect and good will”, and if that failed they should call a council of churches “known to be sound and orthodox in faith and not directly related to either side”. But the disaffected refused to engage in calm conversation, and Mr. Doolittle refused to call a church council, so in 1740 the dispute was referred to the General Court then in session in Springfield. The presiding justice advised compliance with the advice of the Association.

This advice was not followed, the the quarrel continued to divide the church. Finally, in 1741, after the morning service, Mr. Doolittle presented a motion proposing that the dissenters should meet with their pastor and clearly state their points of dissatisfaction, and if he could not satisfy them, they should then bring the matter before the whole church. This was voted affirmatively, but there is no record that the dissenters ever came to their minister or took any further action. They evidently realized that they were in the minority and gave up the struggle. One of the dissenters, Eleazor Mattoon, whose family had been responsible for bringing Mr. Doolittle to Northfield, moved away because of his dissatisfaction with the minister.

The emotions aroused by the Great Awakening soon became less violent, and Mr. Doolittle was able to continue his work with rather general approval. He died on January 9, 1749, at the age of fifty-four, after serving the people of Northfield thirty-two years as pastor, doctor, and community leader. The Boston Gazette and Weekly Journal of January 24 carried this item:

*We are informed that on the 9th instant the Reverend Mr. Doolittle, pastor of the church in Northfield, was suddenly seized with a pain in his breast, as he was mending a fence in his yard, and died in a few minutes time, to the inexpressible grief of the town in general, as well as his own family in particular.*

The inscription on Mr. Doolittle’s tombstone in the Center Cemetery in Northfield describes him as follows:

*Blessed with good intellectual parts,  
Well skilled in two important arts  
Nobly he filled the double station  
Both of a preacher and a physician.  
To cure men’s sicknesses and sins,  
He took unwearied care and pains  
And strove to make his patients whole  
Throughout in body and in soul.  
He loved his God, loved to do good,  
To all his friends vast kindness showed  
Nor could his enemies exclaim  
And say he was not kind to them.  
His labors met a sudden close  
Now he enjoys a sweet repose  
And when the just to life arise  
Among the first he’ll mount the skies.*

There is no mention in Northfield history that Mr. Doolittle had a slave, but from Deerfield records we learn that when he came to Northfield he brought with him a negro boy, Abijah Prince, who thirty-two years later was given his freedom at the time of Mr. Doolittle’s death. As a free citizen he was allowed to draw his share in Northfield’s undivided land, and on the 1751 list of land owners and tax payers, his name is down as

the owner of twenty acres. While on militia duty, he met and fell in love with Lucy Terry, a slave of Ebenezer Wells in Deerfield. Abijah waited to marry her until after he had saved enough money to purchase her freedom, so that her children would not be born as slaves. They had six children with the romantic names of Cesar, Durexa, Drucella, Festus, Tatnai, and Abijah Junior. Tatnai worked for many years for the Hunt family in Northfield.

Abijah evidently prospered, as he was one of the original petitioners and grantees of the town of Sunderland, Vermont, and is named in the charter. His greater claim to fame is through his wife who became one of the outstanding women of her day. She gained local fame as a story teller and ballad writer, and later gained wider fame as an eloquent champion of the rights of black people. When a neighbor claimed some of the land they had been given in Guilford, the case was carried all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States. Lucy presented the case at length before the court, and the presiding Justice, the Honorable Samuel Chase, said that "she made a better argument than any he had heard from any lawyer at the Vermont bar".

### III. John Hubbard's Forty-four Year Pastorate. 1750—1799

For over a year after Mr. Doolittle's death the town was without a permanent minister. The Reverend Isaac Lyman, Yale 1747, came on a trial basis, but he stayed only a few months and left nothing but his name on the records. He was followed by a Yale classmate, John Hubbard of Hatfield, whose name stands out in Northfield history as one of the great leaders of the town. He also came on a trial basis, but very quickly won general approval, and at town meeting on March 15, 1750, was invited to become the permanent minister. The terms of his agreement included an initial grant of one hundred thirty-three pounds, six shillings, eight pence; an annual salary of sixty-six pounds, thirteen shillings, four pence; and "such supply of wood as his family shall stand in need of". No land was offered him as had been to Mr. Doolittle thirty-three years earlier. Mr. Hubbard seems to have had little concern about worldly goods, and as soon as he received the town's invitation he immediately replied, "I do fully and heartily give my consent, and accept thereof".

Mr. Hubbard began his ministry in Northfield at the age of twenty-four, a very eligible young bachelor in a town with a number of girls of marriageable age. The suspense was relieved four years later when he married Anna, the daughter of Captain Samuel Hunt.

At the time Mr. Hubbard began his ministry, the church was still considered as an agency of the town and was controlled by town meeting. The minister was chosen by the town, was paid by the town, and was a town servant. Even small details of the church service were a matter for action by the town. At a town meeting shortly after Mr. Hubbard's arrival it was voted that Dr. Watt's paraphrase of the Psalms, and not the New England version, was to be used at all services.

Even problems of church seating were decided by the town. The warrant for a town meeting in 1754 contained the following article:

*To see if the town will give the liberty to Moses Field, Dr. Andros, and Simon Alexander to cut away seats in the body of the meeting house and make themselves a pew.*

Up until this time the seats were backless slabs of wood, with the men seated on one side of the center aisle and the women on the other. But now people were beginning to want a little more comfort, and the practice began of families seeking permission to build a pew for their exclusive use. This was usually granted in return for some service to the church, such as taking care of the building for a stated period, or installing a window.



For the first ten years of Mr. Hubbard's ministry, church services were held in the simple structure built in 1718, but now that French power in New England had been broken, and peace with the Indians had been established, the people of Northfield were eager to have a church building more worthy of a permanent community. In town meeting in August, 1761, it was voted that a new meeting house should be built, and a committee was appointed to choose a site. This proved to be a very difficult problem, and there was such vigorous difference of opinion that finally a neutral committee from Hinsdale, Sunderland, and Hadley was called in to make the decision.

At a special town meeting, the location suggested by the committee was agreed upon, and a building plan was approved. It was also voted that some of the town lots in Great Meadow should be sold to provide the money for the building. It is obvious that Northfield was not a "dry" town at that time, for the records state that:

*At the auction of the land one mug of flip and two gallons of rum were consumed. . .at the expense of the town. . .(and) for the raising of the roof (the town committee) purchased 2 barrels of New England rum, which cost 9 pounds, 2 shillings, 4 pence, and 4 gallons West India rum at 8 shillings per gallon. (Temple and Sheldon, p. 312)*

It is interesting to note that for liquor consumed at the raising of the roof of the meeting house the town spent twice as much as the minister's monthly salary.

The construction of the church was notable for a number of reasons. It was said to have been the first building in Northfield to have been built by a master builder who used a square rule. And the construction was a very long drawn out process. The vote to build was passed in 1761, the foundation was laid in 1763, the pulpit and pews were installed in 1767, the steeple and bell were added in 1768; and in 1769, with the building of stone steps and a horse block, construction was finally completed. It was not until ten years later that the town voted "to color the meeting house". To finance this improvement, a group of farmers raised extra flax which was sent to Boston to exchange for paint.

The building was fifty-five feet long and forty-four feet wide, with a gallery on three sides, and with a sounding board suspended over the pulpit. In accordance with the new style for churches, seating was no longer on plain benches, but in pews enclosed in panel work. Town meeting appointed a committee to "seat the house". This was a very delicate matter, requiring great tact and diplomacy. The biblical injunction against seeking the chief seats in the synagogue was not observed in New England, and the selectmen would hear about it if the pew assigned did not give a family the honor it felt was its due. Town meeting gave two instructions to the seating committee; the pew along the front wall to the left of the pulpit was reserved for old ladies, either widowed or single; and the pastor was to be given first choice of the remaining pews. To everyone's surprise, Mr. Hubbard chose the pew beside the old ladies, instead of one of two on the aisle in front of the pulpit which were considered the seats of highest honor.

Only adults were seated in the body of the church. The young people were assigned seats in the galleries, where they were under the eye and the rod of the tithing man. The record notes with some pride that the young people of Northfield were so well behaved that the tithing man rarely had to exert his authority.

The new church attracted the attention of people outside Northfield, and some of them began attending the Sunday services. At that time the population of Northfield was less than five hundred, and as the church was not filled to capacity by inhabitants, town meeting voted to rent seats in the gallery to residents of neighboring communities.

Years later, Joel Munsell, publisher of Temple and Sheldon's History of Northfield, wrote these recollections of the church of his boyhood:

*A prominent object to the eye of the traveler was the old meeting house standing in the highway and surmounted by a gilded rooster. It was traditional among the boys that when the brazen fowl heard the ejaculation of the barnyard chanticleer, he crowed also. . . .*

*Tradition also records that when the frame of the edifice was raised, the customary ceremony of drinking, instead of pouring a libation, in a kneeling position upon the belfry deck, was performed by Benjamin Wright.*

*The pews were square boxes, built high and having balusters topped by a rail. To accommodate the occupants while standing in prayer, the seats were made to turn up on hinges, in sections. When the pastor pronounced the amen, straightway there arose a great uproar, produced by letting down the seats, as though they were firing a salute, which much resembled, as nearly as the sound can be reduced to words, "clitter-clatter, bump, whack! BANG!" (pp. 12-13)*

The town not only built the church and arranged the seating; it also set the hour for services and determined the length of intermissions between the morning and afternoon services. By vote of town meeting, the morning service began at 9 A. M., with one hour of intermission during the winter months, one hour and a half during the spring and fall, and two hours in summer. At intermission in winter, worshippers from outlying areas would gather in nearby kitchens to eat the lunches they had brought with them, and to warm themselves after sitting all morning in the freezing atmosphere of the unheated meeting house. Stoves were beginning to come into use in homes, but every effort to install one in church was voted down as being "an unholy innovation". The longer intermission in summer was because some found the heat less endurable than the cold. One man is quoted as saying that he would vote for a stove in winter if some way could be found to cool the church in summer.

But neither cold nor heat could stop the practice of long drawn out church services. A proper service of worship was supposed to fill the entire morning, with another equally long service in the afternoon. Even Mr. Hubbard's long sermons could not fill the time considered necessary, so singing played an important part. As no books were provided for the congregation, the method of "lining the hymn" was followed. First the minister would read the psalm or hymn in its entirety, then a senior deacon would rise, face the congregation, and read the first line, which the congregation would sing. This alternate reading and singing, line by line was continued for the entire hymn, with disastrous effects upon the quality of the music. The matter was brought before town meeting, and on January 11, 1770, it was voted that after the first Sabbath in March, the psalms and hymns were to be sung without the interruption of line by line reading. The vote was passed over some opposition as "lining the hymn" was one of the cherished prerogatives of the deacon's office.

The singing of the hymns in their entirety brought about a great improvement in the quality of the singing, and caused an increased interest in music as an important part of the service of worship. The town voted to convert some of the pews in the front gallery into seats for a choir, and to employ Seth Hastings as choir leader. From this time on there was an annual appropriation for what was first called "Instruction in Psalmody" and later "Instruction in the Art of Singing".

Mr. Hubbard's sincerity and dedication were greatly appreciated in the community, and there was a harmonious feeling between pastor and congregation until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Then Mr. Hubbard's loyalty to the King came into conflict with the town's growing anti-British feeling. Even after the battle of Lexington, Mr. Hubbard continued to pray for God's blessing on King George, saying that he needed prayers more than ever. The local Committee of Safety decided that this must stop, and one Sunday morning, just as the service was about to begin, Deacon Smith, acting for the Committee, arose and stated that prayers for the king were not permissible, and that from now on the pastor should not offer prayer at all, and should only read the psalm and preach the sermon. Mr. Hubbard rejected these instructions as being an infringement on his rights as the duly elected, ordained minister of the Church.

The majority of the congregation supported the minister, but the military leaders refused to back down, and "the war of words, looks, and actions" raged furiously for



month after month, with neither side showing any signs of yielding. Finally, in 1779, a council of nine area churches was called to try to settle the dispute. After the Council had discussed the problem for four days without finding any solution, a group of church members called a special town meeting which drew up a suggested accommodation between the two parties. The pastor was asked to acknowledge himself to be a loyal subject of the independent United States, and to agree to pray for the success of the American arms. The dissenters were asked to accept Mr. Hubbard as "our sincerely respected and dearly beloved pastor". Both parties agreed, and town and church once again worked together in peace and harmony.

At the beginning of Mr. Hubbard's ministry in Northfield, church and town were practically one organization, but now the church was beginning to be recognized as a separate institution with the right to decide church matters at church, rather than town meetings. Although the town was giving up its control over the church, the people of Northfield were not yet ready to allow members of other churches to have civil authority over them. At a town meeting in 1780 it was recommended that the proposed new state constitution should contain the following provision:

*All civil officers should be of the Christian Protestant religion, as the safety of the state calls for the exclusion of all Roman Catholics from holding any civil office.*

And they were equally intolerant of any breach of their strict moral code. There is one recorded case in which, after long consideration at two specially called church meetings, baptism was refused a child born "well grown, plump and lusty" seven months after its parents' wedding.

The rite of baptism was a serious matter for parents who believed that if a child died before being baptized it could not enter heaven. As baptism was a privilege reserved for the infants of church members in good standing, this presented a soul shaking problem to parents who could not in good conscience assent to every item in the creed. For the benefit of such people, if they were of good Christian character, Mr. Hubbard instituted the practice of receiving them into the church on a "half way covenant". This did not give full membership to the parents, but it did extend the privilege of baptism to their children.

Mr. Hubbard died in 1794, after having served the church and town faithfully for over forty-four years, the longest pastorate in Northfield's history. The dissension caused by his loyalty to the King of England had long since been forgotten and he was held in universal affection and esteem. He thought nothing of worldly goods and died so nearly penniless that the town had to buy his coffin and pay all of the funeral expenses. Carved on his tombstone is a very appropriate verse by Oliver Goldsmith. (In the second line the figure forty was changed to eighty.)

*A man he was to all his people dear  
And passing rich on eighty pounds a year;  
Remote from town he held his godly race,  
Nor ever changed or wished to change his place.  
In duty faithful, prompt at every call,  
He watched and wept and felt and prayed for all;  
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,  
Allured to brighter worlds and led the way.*

#### IV. Thomas Mason's Twenty-six Year Pastorate. 1788–1825

*(After his twenty-six years in the Congregational Church, Mr. Mason continued for another five years with the group which became Unitarian.)*

After the death of Mr. Hubbard and before Mr. Mason began his long and colorful ministry in Northfield, for the first time in the memory of all save the oldest inhabitants, the town was without a permanent minister. Several young men came and went without leaving much of a mark on the town. The one who stayed longest was Samuel Clesson Allen, a recent Dartmouth graduate then residing and teaching in Bernardston. He attended the Northfield Church and was highly regarded because of his character and scholarly ability. One of the elders said, "Why look outside? We have right here in our midst an eminently well qualified young man." The idea met with general approval, and in October, 1795, Mr. Allen was invited to become minister of the Northfield Church. As his installation was the first such event in the lives of most of the townspeople, it was made a rather grand occasion.

*The (installing) council was made up of representatives of churches far and near. The hospitality of the town was generous. The new tavern of Captain Elisha Hunt, a towering three-story structure at the corner of Warwick road, was opened to the visitors and the Captain was paid by a town order for fifty lodgings, for one hundred seventy-two meals and for keeping fifty-eight horses over night. His bill included a charge of 4 pounds, 10 shillings for sundries. There was only one sort of sundry dispensed at a tavern and an amount such as fifteen dollars would cover a generous flow of it. . .*

*The president of Dartmouth College came down for the ordination, as did others of the faculty and Mr. Allen's classmates. . . and there was grand singing of hymns and anthems, showing the proficiency to which Northfield voices had been brought under the direction of the chorister regularly employed by the town. (Parsons, pp. 203-4)*

The agreement between the town and Mr. Allen gave evidence that times were changing. For the first time, the minister's salary was listed in dollars (400), and the amount was nearly twice what Mr. Hubbard had been paid at the beginning of his ministry. And for the first time there was a recognition that a minister needs some time off, six Sundays during the first year, and four Sundays every year after that.

Although Mr. Allen had been installed with the most elaborate ceremonies ever seen in Northfield, he stayed for less than three years. His sermons were too scholastic and too rigidly Calvinistic to suit the liberal minded people of Northfield. He was dismissed by a church council which was much less impressive than the one at his ordination. The bill for liquor was only one dollar! Fortunately, there seem to have been no bitter feelings. He continued to live in Northfield, and after his first wife died, he married the daughter of Elisha Hunt. He left the ministry, studied law, and went into politics, serving for some years as State Senator and for ten years as a member of Congress. After that he became a professor at Amherst, and upon retirement returned to Northfield to live.

At the same time that the church was searching for a new voice for the pulpit, it was decided that a new church bell was needed. For thirty years the old bell had called people to both church and town meetings, and at funerals had tolled the age of the deceased. But now it had become "clangy and feeble" and was not considered suitable for the growing Northfield Church, with its well trained choir. A son of the Callender family was working for Paul Revere, and he was entrusted with the task of purchasing one of the highly prized Revere bells, for which the town paid \$41.06, plus \$5.29 for bringing the bell from Boston.

Finding a new minister was more difficult. The town sampled several young men, and after hearing Mr. Thomas Mason through several Sundays, voted to offer him the post. He accepted and agreed to a rather unusual salary arrangement. He was to be paid \$400 annually, and in addition would be given an initial grant of 250 pounds, with the understanding that he would remain in Northfield for at least twenty years.



*If he leave before the expiration of that period, the fault being his own in the opinion of a mutual council, he shall pay back to the town such proportion of the two hundred fifty pounds as the time falls short. (Parsons, p. 225)*

This seems to have been the last time that a minister was given an initial grant, and also the last time that money was listed in pounds.

November 6, 1799, was a proud day for the town of Northfield. The newly installed Revere bell rang out to call together a distinguished assembly of ministers and lay delegates who gathered for the installation of Mr. Mason as the town's seventh minister. The new minister was the center of admiring attention. He was thirty years old, three years out of Harvard, handsome and well built. The older members took pride in his keen intelligence, his eloquence, and his imposing appearance. The young people were proud of the fact that their new minister had been a champion wrestler at Harvard.

He had also gained a reputation at Harvard as a wit and a prankster, and one of his classmates had described him as:

*The Boanerges of a pun,  
A man of science and of fun,  
The quite uncommon witty elf,  
Who darts his bolts and shoots himself. (J. M., p. 18)*

That quality did not leave him when he became a minister, and his witty remarks were a source of great amusement, and sometimes of irritation on the part of those against whom his barbs were aimed.

Neither did he leave behind his skill in wrestling. During a match between young men of Northfield and a neighboring Vermont town, the Northfielders appeared to be losing, so a messenger was sent to urge the minister to take part.

*It had grown late, and the minister, who usually retired early, had already betaken himself to bed. . . Finding his excuses of no avail, he finally arose, dressed himself, and repaired to the scene of action. Shouts greeted him on his arrival. . .*

*The champion of the Vermonters came forward flushed with his former victories. After playing around him for some time, Mr. Mason finally threw him. . . When another antagonist appeared, tripping up his heels with perfect ease, he suddenly twitched him off his center, and laid him on his back. Victory was declared for Northfield, and the good minister was borne home in triumph. (J. M., p. 19)*

Already a hero among the young people, Mr. Mason soon earned a place among the elders as one of the leaders of the town. He was a man of culture and high intelligence with a broad theological outlook, and a warmly human attitude. Though some of the more orthodox thought he was not sufficiently pious, he pleased many by the importance he gave to the Bible. It was at his suggestion that a pulpit Bible was purchased, and he initiated the practice of reading Bible passages, in addition to the Psalms, as a regular part of each service of worship.

Another change in church service was brought about by the acquisition of an organ. Until this time, a tuning fork was the only instrumental aid for the singers. Now Captain Samuel Smith, grandson of Preserved Smith, presented the town with an organ. Although he had moved to Winchester, Captain Smith still loved Northfield, and he gave the organ as an expression of his "respect and attachment for my native town". It was gratefully received at a town meeting called for that purpose, and proudly installed in the gallery of the church. The choir leader laid aside his tuning fork, and from now on used the organ to lead the singing. Although the church was becoming quite proud of its music, Xenophon Jones received only \$15 a year as organist and choir leader.

The choir often used psalm tunes composed by Timothy Swan, one of Northfield's most colorful characters.

*He was a hatmaker whose greater talent was as a hymn writer. . . a genius in music who had given the world hymn tunes now recognized in every church collection. . . His best known tunes were "China" and "Poland", and a collection called "New England*

*Harmony". (Parsons, scattered references)*

*All agree that he was a very peculiar man. . . The famous "China" it is said was composed while recovering from a fit of intoxication, and was written with his finger, in the sand, on Beers Plain. . . He was a contributor to the Poets' Corner of local newspapers. . . He was in charge of the library for a long time. (Temple and Sheldon, p. 552)*

Although he was a composer of hymn tunes, Mr. Swan rarely went to church, possibly because he was sometimes the subject of Mr. Mason's sarcastic remarks. When he did go, he always sat with his hat on, much to the amusement of the young people. He was a fine looking old gentleman, and in winter he wore a striking camel's hair coat, which had a broad cape coming down below his waist. This was a style introduced into Northfield by Mr. Mason one winter when he returned from attending legislature in Boston.

Another colorful character was "Uncle Riah" Wright who, to the great relief of most of his fellow townsmen, had left Northfield to help settle Westminster. There he became captain of the local militia, and because of his dictatorial manner and violent temper he became known as "the terror of Westminster". One of his escapades was his unrestrained support of the pastor of the Westminster Church who had been dismissed from the pulpit because of alleged immoral conduct. Riah defended him violently, and showed his contempt for the new minister by roughly tweaking his nose every time he came near him. As he scornfully disregarded orders to stop, the deacons drew up a statement of excommunication, which they gave to the minister to be read at the Sunday morning service. As the minister started to read the document, Riah marched down the aisle armed with a musket. As if commanding his militia, he shouted, "Make ready. Take aim!", and suited his actions to his words. The minister prudently stopped reading and handed the document to the senior deacon. When the deacon started reading, Riah turned his gun on him. The deacon stopped reading, and closed the meeting with the scriptural phrase, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient". The proclamation of excommunication was folded away and never acted upon.

Fortunately, there is no record of any such unseemly conduct in the Northfield Church, although there were many caustic remarks about Mr. Mason's unconventional and unministerial words and actions. He was a welcome member of a group which met regularly in the town tavern, where his sense of humor was greatly appreciated. But he could also be very critical, and people feared his tongue, which was likened to "a sharp sword". He did not hesitate to tell people what he thought of them, not only in conversation, but also in his sermons. It was said that some people came to church, not for inspiration, but to hear "Priest" Mason's biting comments about their neighbors. The fact that he seldom preached on doctrinal matters disturbed the more orthodox, and helped pave the way for the break in church unity which was soon to come.

The first group reaction against Mr. Mason came when a few of his parishoners withdrew from the town church and started a small Methodist Church in the hills about four miles from the center of town. But travel was difficult, especially in bad weather, and few attended outside hill top neighbors. One prominent citizen from the center of town who did attend was Isaac Prior, who was later to take a leading part in the organization of the Trinitarian Society. He attended the Methodist Church twice each Sunday, driving up the hill in the morning, but walking to the evening service out of consideration for his horse. Mr. Prior was a member of Northfield's leading business firm, "Pomeroy, Prior, and Bowen — Distillers, Merchants and Boating". Mr. Prior was in charge of the boating part of the enterprise, which at that time was quite a sizable business.

*His boat, or scow, having a single mast, and in calm as well as adverse winds, propelled by side oars and setting poles, plied to and from Hartford during the season of navigation, taking down all kinds of produce and returning laden with such commodities as were consumed in country places. (J. M., p. 22)*



The little Methodist Church in the hills did not last long, but the lack of unity in the town church continued. Some were dissatisfied with Mr. Mason on doctrinal grounds, others because they thought his conduct was beneath the dignity expected of a minister of the gospel, and still others because they had been offended by his sharp tongue. And Mr. Mason made no effort to appease his critics. He continued to do as he pleased and say what he thought. In the face of mounting criticism his sarcasm remained unrestrained. But even his harshest critics admitted that the town owed much to his leadership. His contributions to the cultural life of the town were many and varied. He took a leading part in the establishment of a lyceum for lectures and debates, and he helped Thomas Powers organize a Social Library Corporation which purchased books and operated a library for public use.

He also took a very active part in civic affairs, serving more years in General Court than any other man in Northfield history, except Colonel Medad Alexander. One service rather unusual for a parson was the supervision of a gang of workmen replacing rotted wooden water pipes. The men were paid by distance covered, which was paced off by Mr. Mason. As his stride was unusually long, this meant lower pay, and some of the workmen complained that their supervisor should not take such long steps.

Although town and church were becoming increasingly separate organizations, the minister was still an elected servant of the town, and at town meeting on April 14, 1824, a motion was made that Mr. Mason be dismissed as pastor. This was defeated by a vote of ninety-six to twenty-one. One reason for his popularity with the general public was his unflinching sense of humor, which made him a welcome addition to almost any group. A newspaper clipping gives this sample of his humor.

*One of Mr. Mason's young sons slipped into the church just before a harvest festival. A bunch of grapes used as a decoration caught his eye, and holding aloft the biggest bunch he could find, the lad proclaimed; "Hear ye, hear ye! Marriage intended between this bunch of grapes and my mouth. Anyone having any objections speak now or forever hold your peace."*

*Mr. Mason came into the church just in time to hear this proclamation. Seizing the boy by the collar, he announced; "Hear ye, Hear ye! Marriage intended between this rod and this fool's back. If anyone has any objection, let him speak now or forever hold his peace."*

*The boy exclaimed, "I object".*

*"On what grounds?" asked the pastor.*

*"Parties not agreed", answered the boy, as he broke away and ran from the room. (Northfield Herald, 1933)*

Another of Mr. Mason's attractive qualities was his warm sympathy for his fellow men, regardless of their station in life. His parishoners were greatly impressed by his attitude toward Guy, the negro slave of Deacon Timothy Dutton.

*(Guy) a native African, was tatooed on both cheeks before his capture. He was full of nonsense as well as wit. The Sabbath after his funeral, Deacon Dutton and family sent to the desk the usual request for prayers, and the pathetic allusions to the old and faithful slave, and the earnestness and beauty of Mr. Mason's petitions for the family were never forgotten by those who heard them. (Temple and Sheldon, p. 357)*

Despite Mr. Mason's many very fine qualities, he became increasingly unacceptable to a growing number of church members. Some were alienated by his personality, and others objected to his theology. As he ignored repeated demands for his resignation, his congregation began leaving him.

The first to break away were those who held fast to the beliefs and practices inherited from their forefathers. They felt they could not remain in a church where the minister and most of the congregation had accepted the doctrines of Unitarianism. In November, 1825, they organized the Trinitarian Congregational Society, and began holding services

of worship in a school hall under lay leadership.

The second group to leave the town church was composed of those who accepted Unitarianism but could no longer accept Mr. Mason as their minister. In 1827 fifty-six members withdrew and formed the Unitarian Society of Northfield and initiated separate church services. For a short time the Reverend Samuel Presbury, a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, served as their pastor.

A third group, also Unitarian in theology, remained with Mr. Mason in what had been the town church. But even this group continued to demand that he resign. Finally, in 1830, Mr. Mason agreed to leave if the town would pay him a separation allowance of \$1000, which was just about the amount he had been paid as an inducement to come to Northfield thirty-one years earlier. After heated argument, this was agreed to. One evening, as Mr. Mason was sitting in his usual place at the tavern, he heard a farmer boasting that he had sold his hogs for \$300. Mr. Mason remarked to his companions, "I have done better than that. I sold my hogs for \$1000." It took some time for the people of the town to live down the taunt "Northfield Hogs".

After the resignation of Mr. Mason, the two Unitarian groups were reunited in what was called "The Unitarian Congregational Church of Northfield". The Trinitarian group continued on its separate way, and what had been one town church for nearly a century and a half was now permanently divided into two denominations. The parent church ceased to exist and its torch was passed to its two offspring.



PART TWO  
The Trinitarian Congregational Church  
1825–1975

**V. Establishing Another Church. 1825–1850**

One evening in October, 1825, a little group of the more orthodox members of the Northfield Church gathered at the home of John L. Mattoon to share their concern about the theological position being taken by their pastor, the Reverend Thomas Mason. It was becoming increasingly clear to them that Mr. Mason was not following the doctrines of the pioneer church, but was leading the people along Unitarian paths. After long and prayerful discussion, they decided that they could no longer in good conscience remain in that church. They drew up and signed the following statement:

*We, the subscribers, that we may quietly enjoy our religious opinions and be edified in the same, agree to form ourselves into a separate religious society under the name of the Trinitarian Society of Northfield in the County of Franklin and Commonwealth of Massachusetts and to choose such officers and transact such business as shall be incumbent on such society agreeable to the laws of the Commonwealth.*

As the laws of Massachusetts at that time made no provision for the incorporation of new churches, but did provide for religious societies, an application was made to the General Court for the incorporation of the Trinitarian Society of Northfield. Official action on this petition was long delayed, and it was not until February 28, 1829, that the Governor of the State signed the following act of incorporation:

*Sec. 1st Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court Asembled, and by the authority of the same, that Isaac Prior, Rodolphos Lyman, Elisha Alexander Jun. Aaron Lyman, Ebenezer Slate, Elisha Lyman, John Long, John A. Fisher, Thomas Lyman, Elisha Ingram, Phinehas Field Jun. William Field, Lyman Given, Earl Wildes & Nathan Priest, together with those who have associated, or may hereafter associate with them, for the purpose of public worship, be, and they hereby are incorporated into a Religious Society, by the name of the Trinitarian Society in Northfield, with all the powers and privileges, and subject to all the duties and liabilities of Parishes, according to the Constitution and Laws of this Commonwealth, Sec. 2d Be it further enacted that said Society may purchase, hold and possess any estate, real or personal, no exceeding Six Thousand Dollars in value, which they may deem necessary and proper, and apply the interest and income thereof to the support of public worship therein.*

*Sec. 3d Be it further enacted that the powers conferred by this Act may be altered, annulled or repealed, at the pleasure of the Legislature.*

Without waiting for the completion of the legislative act of incorporation, the Society proceeded at once to carry out the purpose for which it had been organized. On November 14, 1825, Obadiah Dickenson, Justice of the Peace, posted the following warrant:

*To Isaac Prior, a suitable member of the Trinitarian Society in the town of Northfield, Greetings. You are hereby required in the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to notify and warn members of said Society qualified by law to vote in town affairs to meet in the Center School in Northfield on Tuesday the 15th day of Nov'r Instant at three Oclock PM*

The Society met in accordance with the warrant and proceeded with plans for the organization of a separate church. Their first step was to ask Mr. Mason for the release from membership in the town church of those who wished to join the Trinitarian Church. This was refused

*Though. . . it did not appear from any copy of the doings of the church that the refusal*

was grounded on any alleged objection to their moral or christian character. (Packard, Moderator of Church Council, Nov. 30, 1825)

The Society then sent letters to the churches in Deerfield, Hadley, Sunderland, Shelburne and Keene, asking them to send their pastor and a lay delegate to an Ecclesiastical Council to assist in organizing a church which would continue the Congregational doctrines and practices of the church of the pioneer settlers of Northfield.

The Council met in the home of Hezekiah Mattoon on the 29th and 30th of November, 1825. After an examination of the character and religious views of the petitioners, the Council approved their request, and adjourned to the hall of the school house for the ceremony marking the official organization of the new church. At that time the "Articles of Faith and Form of Covenant" were drawn up and signed by the thirty original members of the church, whose names are inscribed on a marble plaque in the present Trinitarian Congregational Church building. For some unknown reason, the names of nine of the fifteen charter members of the Society are not on this list, and there is no record that Isaac Prior, the leader in organizing the Society, ever did become a member of the church.

The first recorded business meeting of the new church was held on December 29, 1825. Officers were elected and it was voted that the group would meet for public worship every Sunday morning, without waiting for the appointment of a pastor. It was further voted that:

*Those who shall present certificates of membership from sister churches may be received into our watch and fellowship by giving public assent to our articles of faith and covenant.*

Before the first year was over, eighteen new members had been received into the church, and the future seemed sufficiently secure to warrant "filling the desk" with an ordained minister. They already had a minister in their congregation, the Reverend Eli Moody, possibly distantly related to the family of D. L. Moody. Eli Moody had received an M. A. degree from Middlebury College and had prepared himself for the ministry by private study with the Reverend Perkins in East Amherst. He seems to have been living in Montague, but came to Northfield to help in the organization of the new church, serving as its first moderator. On February 17, 1826, he wrote:

*At Northfield where I am now preaching, and where the deadly influence of Unitarianism has so long been felt, there appears to be a shaking among the bones which have so long in that valley been "exceedingly dry", and some signs of life are very clearly manifested. A few of the people of that place, who could not be satisfied with the preaching they have had for years past, have separated themselves from the mass and have formed a new Society, with a determination to maintain Orthodox preaching in Northfield. . .*

*They made application for me to supply them, and I commenced preaching for them the first of January. . . They have no meeting house but have fitted up a building to hold their meetings in for the present, which has formerly been occupied as a store. It is quite comfortable for a small congregation to worship. My congregation has gradually increased from Sabbath to Sabbath since first I began preaching there; and the solemnity has also increased. I think I had more than 200 hearers last Sabbath; and such a stillness and solemnity, I think I never witnessed in a worshipping assembly except where there was a general revival. . .*

*I am informed that there never was a revival of religion in Northfield. Their present minister (Thomas Mason) who has been there nearly thirty years is openly opposed to them. He says they are not the work of the Lord, but the work of the Devil!!! What we call the Doctrine of Grace, he boldly ridicules, both in the Pulpit and out of it.*

Mr. Eli Moody's theology evidently satisfied his orthodox congregation, and on October 17, 1826, the Trinitarian Society voted to invite him to become the regular minister of the newly organized church. Two days later the Trinitarian Church took similar action, and a joint committee was appointed to extend the invitation to Mr.



Moody. This strange duplication of effort was made necessary because the laws of Massachusetts at that time stipulated that only corporations composed of male adults could transact business of legal standing. The church could not qualify because it included women and children in its membership. The Society could, because its membership was limited to those "qualified to vote in town affairs". The Society was the legal owner of all church property and was responsible for business and financial matters. The Church was responsible for spiritual and doctrinal concerns, and for the admission, transfer, and discipline of church members. This dual relationship continued for over seventy years until an amendment to the state constitution made provision for the incorporation of churches.

Mr. Moody accepted the invitation to become "Minister of the Society and Pastor of the Church", and was officially installed by a council of neighboring churches. In a letter to a friend, he wrote:

*The public services were performed in the (First Parish) meeting house, with the consent of Mr. Mason and his Society. He, however, did not attend, but many of his people did. I now find myself very pleasantly and happily situated. The people are harmonious, and, so far, appear like a very kind and affectionate people.*

Mr. Moody's only misgivings seem to have been that he knew he would have difficulty supporting himself and his family on the proposed salary of \$400 a year. But he felt that he could not ask for more because he knew how limited were the financial resources of the newly organized church. Most of its members had very little money to spare, and by withdrawing from the town church, they were no longer entitled to receive support of their church from town taxes. (From the first settlement of Massachusetts until the disestablishment of churches in 1833, town churches, usually Congregational, were recognized by law as tax supported institutions.) Furthermore, they had lost all rights to any of the assets of the town church. In the famous Dedham case in 1820, the court ruled that when a group separated from a church, "the members who remain, though a minority, constitute the Church in such Parish, and retain the rights and property belonging thereto".

Though earnest and dedicated, the little group in Northfield had difficulty in meeting the expenses of the church. After struggling along for two years, it was decided to appeal for aid to the "Domestic Missionary Society" in Boston. In his letter to the Society, Mr. Moody pictured in moving terms the spirit of his little flock.

*The Lord Jesus has here a little band to serve him. They meet with many discouragements, but though faint sometimes, are still pursuing. Within two years the Church has increased from eighteen to fifty members. The Lord has blessed them with gentle dews of His grace, if not with refreshing showers. A happy unanimity of feeling and purpose pervades the church. The public assemblies are solemn, and an increasing interest in the cause of truth is manifested, while prayer is going up to God without ceasing for the revival of His work. No suitable place for the worship of God has yet been prepared, and their enemies are not slow to say of them, "What do these feeble Jews?". But their trust is in the Lord, who made heaven and earth, whose are the silver and the gold, and for whose glory they are willing to make large sacrifices.*

The Domestic Missionary Society, which later became the Home Missionary Society, evidently was favorably impressed, and in 1828 it began including in its budget the sum of one hundred dollars per year for the support of the Northfield Church. It was not until 1876 that the church had grown sufficiently in numbers and resources so that the Northfield Trinitarian Society felt able to vote that they should now depend upon themselves and ask no more aid from the Missionary Society. The church then started contributing to mission work at home and abroad, and within a few years more had been returned than had been received.

When the church was first organized it met for worship in the school house, later in an empty store belonging to Timothy Dutton, paying him an annual rental of \$25. In spite

of its financial difficulties, the little band was determined to have "a suitable place for the worship of God". After weeks of talking and planning, on October 20, 1828, the Society passed the following motion:

*That we build a meeting house upon the plan presented by Dea Phineas Field, Jr., viz: 58 feet long and 44 feet wide, 21 feet high and a porch or belfry 25 feet long and 8 feet wide with a vestry under the east end 44 feet long and 30 feet wide.*

The Church concurred, and work began immediately. At the laying of the corner stone on November 22, 1828, the following dedicatory hymn was sung:

*While here we assemble for acts of devotion  
We'll think on Thy goodness with grateful emotion,  
We'll raise our Hosannas to Him who hath led us  
From errors wild maze, and with manna hath fed us.  
Hallelujah the Lamb who hath purchased our pardon,  
We'll praise Him again when we pass over Jordan,  
We'll think on the mercies we now are possessing,  
And wait for Jehovah to crown with his blessing  
Our efforts to build on this humble foundation  
A house for His name for His sure habitation.  
Hallelujah to the Lamb who hath purchased our pardon,  
We'll praise Him again when we pass over Jordan.*

Almost everyone in the parish had some share in the building of the church. Mrs. Mary Dutton gave the land, others gave money or building materials. Young and old volunteered their labor. The women of the church provided refreshments and it was noted with pride that this was the first meeting house to be built in Northfield without "fortifying the laborers with intoxicating drink". This was evidently quite an accomplishment as Northfield at that time was far from being a "dry" town. One resident recalled that:

*Every householder in the fall stocked his cellar, as a matter of course, with a certain number of barrels of cider as habitually as with a requisite number of bushels of potatoes. (J. M., p. 7)*

As the cider usually became quite hard before it was consumed, this resulted in frequent intoxication among the men.

A number of unpleasant incidents caused by drink gave an impetus to a temperance movement which had been started some years earlier. The Greenfield newspaper in July, 1833, reported:

*Benjamin Callender, Sr., was one of the initiators of the Temperance Movement in Northfield. Along with a committee of solid citizens, he was one of the signers of a long statement concerning the need for action to prevent the further inroads of intemperance in the town.*

The people of the North Church, as it was then called, were proud of their temperance, and they were proud of their new church building. Miss Carrie Barber described it in these words:

*Its white exterior of excellent proportions and simple dignity with the old colonial four spired belfry tower; across its front the open porch with high steps and center horse block. . . its interior with high pulpit and singers' gallery across the opposite end; its straight-backed family pews, flanking its two aisles.*

One feature not uncommon in the early churches was that the pulpit was placed between the front doors. As the pews faced the pulpit, the congregation could watch the people coming in, "Thus avoiding the habit of turning the head to welcome the newcomers", as one elderly member remarked. Some say the original reason for having the congregation face the front door was to avoid the possibility of hostile Indians slipping into the church to attack the congregation from the rear. But this arrangement caused considerable distraction, and some embarrassment to late-comers, and in 1849 a



petition was circulated asking permission of pew owners to turn their pews around, at the same time soliciting contributions to pay the cost.

Shortly after the church was built, stoves were installed. This was a controversial innovation in the early American churches, as is evidenced by this verse in the Boston Post in 1783.

*Extinct the secret fires of love  
Our zeal grown cold and dead  
In the house of God we fix a stove  
To warm us in their stead.*

Someone remarked that if the minister would preach more sermons on Hell fire, the people would not be so cold. One day, Satan's fiery kingdom was referred to, and as they were leaving the church, they saw smoke from a fire in West Northfield. Someone called out, "Satan's Kingdom", and that was the origin of the name by which this area is still known.

But even with stoves, the church continued to be too cold for comfort on cold winter days, and ladies brought old-fashioned foot warmers, tin boxes filled with live coals. Owners of pews could provide carpets and cushions as desired to help them endure two long sermons, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. And the pews had doors which could be latched to help keep out the icy winds.

Another innovation which aroused some opposition was the provision of hymn books with words and music. As an objector in another church explained:

*Anybody with common sense ought to know that it will not help the voice to look when you sing upon those things that you call keys and bars, with black and white tadpoles, some with their tails up, and some with their tails down, decorated with black flags and trying to crawl through the fence. It's all the work of the Devil. (Quoted in the "Choir Leader," June 1966)*

With a salaried minister and a building of its own to care for, expenses mounted, and the Society had increasing difficulty in raising the money needed. The congregation was small and contained no people of wealth. Public tax money was no longer available for church support. The Society could, however, use the tax method on a voluntary basis. A common tax rate for church support was one per cent of real and personal property, basing the assessment on that used by the town in levying its taxes. This church tax was not legally binding, and those who so desired were entitled to "sign off", and many did so because they had no money with which to pay. But it speaks well for their loyalty to the church that those who were able to do so continued to pay the so-called church tax, in addition to helping in other ways.

One commonly used method of raising money was by subscriptions for special purposes and contributions at special times. It was not until 1881 that taking up a collection at Sunday services became a regular practice. One source of income was selling "the slips", as the pews were often called. They were sold at auction, the bidder being required to pay at least the price placed upon the pews by a committee formed for this purpose. Prices ranged from \$23 to \$83, depending upon the importance of their position in the church. Deeds to pews were "witnessed and sealed before a Justice of the Peace, and were as lengthy and involved with legal phrases as would now be used to convey a large estate". And even though the pews were legally bought and paid for, the owners still had to pay an annual rental of twelve per cent of the purchase price.

To avoid the necessity of using money, a very scarce commodity, the care of the church was sometimes provided for by volunteer labor. Sometimes the sexton was paid by assigning him a pew rent-free. However, the usual practice was to give the work to the lowest bidder, the annual payment ranging from five to seven dollars.

Business and financial matters were taken care of at meetings of the Trinitarian Society. Church meetings were concerned with spiritual affairs and personal problems.

The little band of men and women who had the courage to break away from the town church and establish a church of their own were people of very strong conviction, very much in earnest about their religion. In their Articles of Faith they declared:

*We believe that watchfulness over the life, holy meditation, and conscientious attention upon public, family, and secret worship, together with a steady practice of righteousness, truth, sincerity, and charity toward men, and of sobriety, chastity, and temperance toward ourselves, are the indispensable duties of every christian.*

Church members took very seriously their obligation to carry out these "indispensable duties" in their own lives, and also accepted their responsibility to help fellow members do likewise. In 1829 a rather detailed statement of "Principles of Discipline" was printed and distributed to all members. Church Discipline was defined as:

*The exercise of that authority which the Lord Jesus Christ has committed to a Church, in regulating the conduct of its members.*

In dealing with those who neglected their Christian duties, church members were enjoined to follow literally the instructions given in Matthew 18:15-17:

*If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

*But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*

*And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

The early church records are filled with accounts of church meetings called to hear some member "tell it unto the church" after his calling on an erring brother or sister, first alone and then with others, had failed to produce satisfactory results. These disciplinary meetings followed a regular pattern, similar to civil court proceedings. They could not be called until ten days after the accused had been notified in writing of the charges against him, so that he could prepare his defense and bring witnesses if he so desired.

In some cases the offenses are listed in general terms, such as lack of Christian character, or conduct unworthy of a church member. Usually they are defined specifically: absence from Sabbath worship; "profaning the Sabbath" by working, traveling on secular business, or engaging in frivolous activities; making untrue statements; neglecting family prayers; profanity; intoxication; slander; reporting the doings of the church and its members to outsiders. There are three recorded cases of unchastity, one of gambling, and one of stealing. This last offense occurred in 1885, and is the last recorded disciplinary case. The offender was excommunicated.

In one unusual case a woman was accused on the following counts:

1. *Neglecting and treating with apparent contempt the important duty of family prayers.*
2. *Speaking in contemptuous manner of the performance of her husband in social and religious meetings.*
3. *Accusing him of drunkenness, and imitating before him and others the actions of the drunkard.*
4. *Threatening to leave his house in a manner improper for a wife.*
5. *Causing her husband to leave his bed and his house for a part or the whole of the night.*

After four months of investigation, and after listening to testimony at eight church meetings, it was finally voted that the charges were not substantiated and that the accused, both husband and wife, should be restored to good standing and fellowship in the church.

A charter member of the church was the accused in one of the most bizarre episodes in the annals of church discipline. It all started when a neighbor remarked that she was tired of seeing her wear her old hood, and that she ought to burn the old thing. Instead of



being burned, the old hood was loaned to another neighbor "to wear home in the dark and the rain". As the neighbor did not return it, some days later the original owner picked up the hood and carried it home, and as a result was accused of stealing.

The battle of words raged so furiously that it was discussed at a church meeting, and a committee was appointed to look into the matter. After investigation, the committee reported that the owner of the hood had behaved in an unchristian manner, and that "the honor of religion requires some acknowledgment from her to the Church". As this was not given, the matter was referred back to the church, and over the next two years was discussed at twelve church meetings. No conclusion could be reached, and it was decided to refer the question to an Ecclesiastical Council, composed of the pastor and a lay delegate from churches in Winchester, Hinsdale, Greenfield, and Athol.

After hearing testimony from both sides, the Council ruled that the charge of stealing was unsupported, but that the defendant had resorted to evasions and prevarications, and had threatened one of the witnesses. Therefore the Council concluded:

*Recognizing our accountableness to God we must, with all kindness and tenderness, declare as follows:—The Church have a right to expect and should require from the accused that she give to them due Christian satisfaction, by confessing herself guilty of the sins above specified and showing herself penitent for those sins: Should she fail of affording them such satisfaction, the Church ought to exclude her from their communion.*

Although the accused had agreed to abide by the decision of the Council, she refused to confess and apologize, insisting that she had done no wrong. Consequently, at a church meeting on February 9, 1841, it was unanimously voted that she be excommunicated (her husband not voting). This vote as usual was by the men, and it was suggested that the opinion of the women also be asked. They also voted for excommunication. Even though the women agreed with the men, asking their opinion aroused opposition, and it was voted that "In all business meetings the votes of the Male Members alone be counted".

Those found guilty of departure from the accepted standards of conduct were subject to various penalties, depending upon the seriousness of the offense. Slight offenses, if followed by confession and apology, brought only admonition. More serious offenses brought suspension, either for a specified period, or until the offender "make Christian satisfaction". Those found guilty of the most serious offenses were excommunicated. Both those suspended and those excommunicated could, after a lapse of time (in one case after twelve years), express repentance and appeal to be restored to the fellowship of the church. This was sometimes granted, sometimes refused, depending upon the congregation's judgment as to the sincerity of the repentance.

At the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Trinitarian Congregational Church, Professor Morse, then head of the History Department at the Mount Hermon School, had this to say about church discipline in the early years of the church:

*The church records of the first fifty years show that church discipline was no mere form. At first one thinks the issues rather trivial, but behind them was the Puritan conscience and the English sense of justice, two forces in New England life that we can ill afford to lose.*

*So the Trinitarian Society and Church in Northfield continued not unworthily the tradition of the founders, the vivid sense of God in the lives of men, the right of men of like mind to come together as a true church of Christ, and the stern obligation of those who had experienced saving grace to walk as children of the light.*

The members of the early church considered it their duty to correct fellow members when detected in wrong doing, but they also did not spare themselves, as is evidenced by this resolution which recognized their own faults:

*We the members of this church deeply sensible that we have come short of fulfilling our covenant obligations since we have taken the vows of God upon us; and particularly that*

*for some time past many of us have been more than ordinarily deficient in the various duties of our profession, do hereby publicly confess and lament our sins, lukewarmness and unfaithfulness to our covenant obligations, before God and our fellow men and humbly ask the forgiveness of both: and we do now in this public and solemn manner, renew our covenant vows and engagements to be the Lord's, resolving through the help of divine grace to make it our constant care and endeavor to be in the future more faithful to our God, to each other, and to our fellow men.*

The church records show many instances of human weakness and folly, but they also give inspiring evidence of deep faith and strong commitment. The serious concern of the members of the church for the religious development of themselves and their fellow men is evidenced by the following excerpts from the church records of the 1830's, beginning with the rather awesome schedule for one Sunday in 1831:

*Prayer meetings at different houses at sunrise and at 9:30 at the meeting house. At 10:30 Rev. Mr. Packard preached, after which. . .the church (members) solemnly renewed their covenants. Prayer meeting at 1 o'clock. At 2 Rev. Mr. Smith preached. Meetings at the meeting house and at the school house in the evening.*

*June 15, 1832. Appointed a committee of six to visit all the members of the church, and such others as they think best, to converse with them on the subject of religion.*

*Dec. 27, 1832. Committee appointed to provide for the monthly distribution of tracts. Also a committee to revive the Temperance Society. (The distribution of tracts must have been quite extensive, as one report tells of 33,480 tracts distributed to 270 families by twelve persons.)*

*Feb. 12, 1835. A committee appointed to consider measures for the revival of religion among us. Another committee appointed to endeavor to cultivate more kind and friendly feelings by more social gatherings.*

*Aug. 30, 1835. Voted that letters be addressed to the non-resident members of this church inquiring into their spiritual state and as to why they do not unite with the churches where they reside.*

The Northfield Trinitarian Church also demanded much of its young people. As "children of the light", they were expected to live in accordance with the strict standards of their Puritan forefathers. They were not allowed to have social gatherings in the vestry of the church, as the Unitarian young people were doing, on the grounds that a church building should be used only for religious services. Both churches frowned upon playing cards, but differed in their attitude toward dancing. The Unitarians held dances in their homes, but never in the church building. The Trinitarians forbade dancing anywhere, anytime.

During these years there was a growing recognition of the importance of the religious education of the young, and parents were urged to send their children to the Sabbath School. "For the edification of the young" a small library was provided. Unfortunately, children's books in those days were of questionable value. In a paper written for the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the church, Mrs. Alexander gave this description of the Sabbath School library:

*Many of the books were biographies of good children, very pious children, who died young, thus conveying to the mind of the youthful readers the idea that early piety must soon be followed by early farewell to this beautiful world to which we so fondly cling.*

Mrs. Alexander did not have a high regard for the Sabbath School library, but she did have fond memories of the teachers.

*I could name you the teachers who for years in succession gathered around them large classes for the faithful study of God's word. Children were taught they must attend with lessons learned and texts of scripture for recitation. . . .Changes have gradually rendered houses of worship more comfortable but whether the spiritual changes have kept pace, who shall decide?*

In spite of high standards of personal conduct and a deep concern for religion, there were occasional unseemly disputes between the congregation and the minister. One of the



most unpleasant of these arose in 1842 when hard times brought about greatly reduced giving to the church. The Society asked the minister to accept a temporary reduction in salary, but he refused to do so. As the church fell behind in its payments of his salary, the minister began buying things on credit, telling the creditors to send the bills to the Trinitarian Society. Suddenly, he left town for parts unknown, without notifying anyone or making any arrangements for church services. Six weeks later, as suddenly as he had disappeared, he reappeared and resumed his pastoral duties.

He refused to meet with a committee of the Society, and instead called an Ecclesiastical Council, with delegates from neighboring churches, to which he presented his complaints. The Council, without giving the Society a chance to present its case, ruled that the minister must be paid an extra \$150, in addition to the regular salary, with no diminution for the six weeks absence. This the Society refused to do. From then on, church attendance and giving diminished markedly, and the minister finally gave up the struggle and resigned. The case aroused so much talk and criticism throughout the area that the Society printed and circulated a twelve page pamphlet defending its position.

The next pastor had been with the church only a few months when he was accused of improperly breaking up the engagement of two of his parishoners, presumably because the young lady fell in love with the pastor. As the church seemed hopelessly divided on the question, once again an Ecclesiastical Council was called to settle trouble between the Northfield Church and its minister. The Council met, heard all sides of the question, and ruled that the charge of direct and designed interference in the engagement had not been proven, but that the pastor's conduct *was not characterized by that prudence and discretion which ought to govern the conduct and the movements of a minister of the gospel in respect to the other sex. . . Though he can no longer be useful as a minister in this place, he may yet be useful in some other field of labor.*

Fortunately, in the long history of the Northfield Church conflicts between the minister and the congregation were few and far between. Most ministers were held in affection and esteem. The high ideals of the people of Northfield in regard to their ministers is expressed in this poem, by an unknown author, written to be read at the installation of a new minister.

*We bid thee welcome in the name  
Of Jesus, our exalted head:  
Come as a servant; so he came,  
And we receive thee in His stead.  
Come as a shepherd; guard and keep  
This fold from Hell, and earth, and sin;  
Nourish the lambs, and feed the sheep,  
The wounded heal, the lost bring in.  
Come as an angel; hence to guide  
A band of pilgrims on their way:  
That safely walking by thy side,  
We fail not, faint not, turn, nor stray.  
Come as a teacher sent from God,  
Charged his whole counsel to declare;  
Lift over our ranks the prophet's rod,  
While we uphold thy hands in prayer.  
Come as a messenger of peace,  
Filled with the spirit, fired with love;  
Live to behold our large increase,  
And die to meet us all above.*

## VI. The Era of Dwight L. Moody. 1850—1900

In the last half of the nineteenth century the dominant figure in the Northfield Trinitarian Congregational Church, and in the town, was Dwight L. Moody, then considered by many to be the leading evangelist in the world. Probably no other man ever had as great an influence on the Northfield Church. This influence began while Mr. Moody was still living in Chicago and came to Northfield for his vacations. His mother and brothers were then members of the Unitarian Church, and Mr. Moody would attend the Sunday morning services with them. But he had become a warm friend of many of the children in his neighborhood who attended the Trinitarian Sunday School, and as soon as the Unitarian services were over, he would hurry to the Trinitarian Church to speak to the children in Sunday School.

In 1875, after his return from his great evangelistic campaign in Great Britain, Mr. Moody bought a home in Northfield, and from then on made this town his headquarters. He no longer attended morning worship at the Unitarian Church, but associated himself completely with the Trinitarian Church, though he never transferred his membership from the church he had helped establish in Chicago. Whenever he was in town he attended the Trinitarian Church and threw himself with dynamic energy into every phase of the work of the church. In this he enlisted his brothers' help, and when they protested there was little they could do, he replied, "You can't do much alone, but you and the Lord with you can do a great deal".

Though Mr. Moody was not an ordained minister, he often preached at both morning and afternoon services. When it was known that he would be preaching, people crowded in from the whole countryside. As this overtaxed the seating capacity of the church, Mr. Moody would invite the children to come forward and sit on the steps around the pulpit, "Seats made comfortable by encouraging nods from their fathers and their nearness to their good friend, Mr. Moody". Sometimes special trains were run from Greenfield and Brattleboro. Farmers and their families came by horse and buggy or wagon, and many would sit in their vehicles in front of the church throughout the service. The Greenfield Gazette and Courier of September 30, 1875, wrote:

*Moody and Sankey held services in Northfield on Sunday the 12th, the people coming from all over the country round so that the Orthodox Church proved too small, and Mr. Moody spoke from the church steps to an audience of a thousand in the morning. At five o'clock Mr. Moody preached again to an audience of two thousand.*

After the tremendous success of his evangelistic meetings in England, Mr. Moody became a person of world renown, and Northfield experienced the exciting sensation of being front page news in metropolitan newspapers. They told of the great throngs who were stirred by Mr. Moody's preaching, and one account described the thrilling experience when P. P. Bliss sang the verses of "Hold the Fort", with thousands responding in the chorus, "By Thy grace we will".

The New York Tribune called Northfield "a stronghold of Unitarianism" and speculated as to what would happen when the great evangelist directed his efforts against this sect. At that time the minister of the Unitarian Church in Northfield was the Reverend Jabez T. Sunderland, an unusually gifted preacher. He and Mr. Moody had worked together in the slums of Chicago, and he immediately invited Mr. Moody to preach from his pulpit. Mr. Moody declined, as he felt he could not preach from a pulpit in which doctrines were promulgated that denied the divinity of Christ.



Now, for the first time since the churches had separated a half century earlier, the town was torn by serious religious controversy. The Unitarians considered that Mr. Moody was attacking them directly with the vigorous gospel sermons, such as "The Religion of Jesus is Better Than All Isms", using as his text "Their rock is not as our rock". Mr. Sunderland felt that he had to defend the Unitarians, so he preached a sermon on "Orthodoxy—The Worst Enemy of Christianity", using as his text "After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers". This sermon was published in pamphlet form and was widely circulated as the Unitarian position as opposed to orthodox Christianity. Mr. Sunderland did not mention Mr. Moody by name, but there was no doubt as to whom he was referring when he spoke critically of the theology of the popular preachers of the day:

*No matter if these men do draw crowded houses, and win what for a moment seems a success. It is all the same. Their success is a rush light. A whiff of sober reason blows it out.*

The controversy between these two unusually effective preachers stirred the whole town to its depth, and religion became the chief topic of conversation. Fortunately, the liberal attitude of most people in both churches, and the sincerity and good will of both leaders, plus the fact that both men were more interested in righteousness of conduct than in doctrinal matters prevented the controversy from degenerating into personal bitterness. Mr. H. W. Rankin, a close associate of Mr. Moody's, in a letter to A. P. Fitt, Mr. Moody's son-in-law, throws an interesting light on Mr. Moody's attitude toward the Unitarians:

*Grandma Moody told me that she continued going to the Unitarian Church until a preacher came along who said such things about the Lord Jesus as she could not stand, and never went again. I think that must have been sometime before 1875. . . I once asked D. L. if he did not think his mother was truly a Christian woman during those years when she brought up her family to attend the Unitarian Church. He said "I certainly do. I believe one may be a believing disciple of Christ without, or before, a clear conviction of his Deity. The twelve apostles believed in him as the Messiah, supernaturally sent, without understanding the full meaning of that term. I think that until the Day of Pentecost — they were all Unitarians of the sort as was Channing himself".*

Dwight L. Moody and Jabez Sunderland rank among the most outstanding of the many great men who at one time lived in Northfield. Mr. Moody's fame is well known; less well known is the fact that Dr. Sunderland left here to become a national leader in the Unitarian Church and a highly respected Oriental scholar. He served for some years in India, and his book "India in Bondage" was widely used by the leaders of the independence movement in India. It was banned by British authorities in India, and its printer and publisher were fined and sent to prison. When Dr. Sunderland died, a delegation came from India for his memorial service. John Haynes Holmes said of him:

*Jabez T. Sunderland, dead at 94 years of age, was the most distinguished as well as the most venerable of Unitarian clergymen. A profound and reverent religionist, an ardent theologian, a Bible scholar of authority and influence, a trained scientific observer and thinker, a lover of justice and champion of liberty, his fame carried to three continents. In his life he labored in seven countries, in his death he was mourned as deeply in India as in America. . . What Lafayette was in his youth and with his sword to America, Dr. Sunderland was in his old age and with his pen to India.*

To add to the religious ferment in Northfield in those days, a little group of devout Second Adventists had gathered at their camp meeting grounds on Beers Plain Road to await the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. They believed that 1877 was the fateful year because of the duplication of the figure seven. As evidence, one of their leaders, Michael Malley, pointed out that the names of the first book of both the Old and the New Testament contained seven letters. So a little group of the faithful gave away their possessions, and clad in robes of white, gathered on the Farms Road to await their

ascension. They believed that they would be carried to Heaven, while the faithless would be destroyed. The fact that even the double seven failed to produce the end of the world seems to have been too much for their faith. At least there is no record of any further activities of this particular group.

Of far greater importance was the religious awakening brought about by Mr. Moody and his associates. A number of nationally known religious leaders took up residence in the town, among them Sankey, Pentecost, Scofield, and Pierson. Many more were drawn here by the summer conferences, which were started in 1880 in the Trinitarian Church, but later moved to the Northfield School campus. They were led not only by Mr. Moody, but also by outstanding religious leaders of the English speaking world. Not without reason was Northfield sometimes called "the religious capitol of America".

The Trinitarian Church, with its seating capacity of four hundred, had been adequate for sixty years but was now far too small. This was partly due to the great crowds who came to hear Mr. Moody, and partly because the congregation included the students from the Northfield and Mount Hermon Schools. Mr. Moody wanted them to attend church with the people of the town. He thought it was better for the students to go to a regular church, away from the familiar round of school life, and he thought that they were a great help to the church. He often said that the underlying purpose of the schools was "to help the Church of God, including this branch in my home town".

But a sanctuary which could seat only four hundred was far too small for the numbers now attending. One Sunday morning, at the close of the service, Mr. Moody asked the congregation to stay for a few minutes as he had a matter he wanted to bring before them. "If you will unite with the Schools in building a new church, I will raise \$5000, Mr. Sankey here will give \$1000 and Mr. Marshall will give another \$1000". The two gentlemen nodded their heads in agreement, and at a special church meeting held soon after the members voted unanimously in favor of building, and committees were appointed to make plans and conduct a financial campaign.

The building site originally chosen was a lot on Main St., adjacent to the residence of Mr. Pentecost, who was out of town at the time. As soon as he heard of the plan, he wrote objecting that a church next door would disturb the quiet he needed for his writing and would shut off his view, and offering to provide the money for another site. Mr. A. M. D. Alexander solved the problem by buying and presenting to the Society four and a half acres on a knoll near Mill Brook, above the stone marking the spot where Aaron Belding had been killed by the Indians in 1756. As soon as the land was secured, stone for the foundation was quarried from beyond Notch Mountain and hauled to the site. Catholic men in the community showed their good will toward their sister church by volunteering their labor and their teams to cut and haul the stone.

The Building Committee, consisting of Edward Barber, S. C. Holton, and Ira D. Sankey, recommended to the church the plans submitted by the architect, G. F. Rivinius, and the bid of \$24,900 by Mr. Marshall, who was Treasurer of the Seminary, and also a contractor who had just completed the Northfield Inn and the Talcott Library at the Seminary, as the Northfield School for Girls was then called. The church approved, and work began in the spring of 1888.

On June 28, 1888, the corner stone was laid in an impressive ceremony. Among the thirty-one articles buried in the corner stone were a history of the church, a list of the members, copies of the church covenants, a Bible, a copy of Gospel Hymns, photographs, local newspapers, catalogues of the Northfield and Mount Hermon Schools, and a booklet, "Prevailing Prayer", by D. L. Moody. The ceremony was brought to a thrilling close when Mr. Sankey stood on the stone and sang "The Ninety and Nine" more beautifully than he had ever sung before. His voice carried across the valley and was heard by a man, not previously interested in religion, who was sitting on his porch reading. He was deeply moved and felt that he was one of the lost sheep. He decided then and there



that he wanted to become one of the ninety and nine.

By May, 1889, construction was completed, and the keys, forty-four in number, were delivered to the building committee. The congregation was justifiably proud of their new structure, literally founded on a rock. And for the first time in years there were usually seats for everyone who came to church.

*Its seating capacity provided for 1056, allowing 18 inches for a person, with 150 additional seats in the ladies' parlor when necessary, bringing the seating capacity to fully 1200.*

The problem of the assignment of seats to the members was the subject of lengthy discussion. In the old church, the custom of private ownership of pews had been followed. Mr. Moody argued strongly for free pews, and his views were finally accepted. But the custom of regular seats was still followed, and a committee was appointed to arrange the seating, with instructions to assign seats as nearly as possible as they had been in the old church.

Another break with custom was that the windows in the sanctuary were of plain glass, this again in deference to the wishes of Mr. Moody. He had no use for stained glass, as he wished the church always to have light enough so that people could see to read their Bibles.

On May 5, 1889, the first service was held in the new building, but as it was mortgaged for \$6000, it was decided to postpone the official dedication until the debt could be paid. This took eight years of continued effort. \$1000 was raised by the sale of the old building to an organization called "Sons of Veterans", which used it as a club house until it was destroyed by fire in 1910. Gifts came in from time to time and the remaining portion was finally raised one Sunday morning when, at the close of the service, Dr. Arthur Pierson arose and said that a church of God should not have a debt hanging over it. He called for pledges, first asking those to stand who would give \$100 each, then \$50, and then \$25, and finally \$10. Enough was raised at this meeting to pay off the debt, and the new building was officially dedicated on May 26, 1897.

With the impetus of a new building, and the inspiring leadership of D. L. Moody and gifted pastors and active lay workers, there was a marked increase in membership and activities. In 1897 Mrs. Moody began what was first called "The Maternal Association", which brought young mothers together for prayer and counsel. This proved to be so helpful that it quickly grew into a church organization called "The Mothers Meeting" which continued long after Mrs. Moody's death.

Another very active community service was called "District Work". The church had long tried to reach out into the surrounding rural areas. Years earlier there had been a regular distribution of tracts on religious subjects, and later Mr. Moody had raised money to buy three "church wagons" to bring people from outlying districts to the Sunday services. As it was impossible to bring any great numbers into the town, the services of the church were carried to the countryside. The area was divided into nine districts, corresponding to the school districts. The work was under the general direction of a church committee, which appointed a supervisor for each district. One of the most active leaders in this work was Sam Higginbottom, who later gained international recognition as an agricultural missionary in India.

Northfield and Mount Hermon students were enlisted to work with the young people throughout the district. They visited homes, held meetings, taught Bible classes, and invited people to come to church. To train these volunteer workers, a "Bible Training School" was started at the Northfield Inn. In 1908 the work of this training school was taken over by the Bible Department at the Northfield School.

For over seventy years the Northfield Trinitarian Congregational Church had operated under the dual leadership of two organizations, the Church itself, and the Trinitarian

Society. It had long been evident that the two should be one, but it was not until 1887 that the following amendment to the State Constitution of Massachusetts made possible the legal incorporation of the Church.

*Any church now existing, or that may be hereafter organized in this Commonwealth, may be incorporated by the provisions of this act. . . Any religious society connected with a church incorporated under the provisions of this act. . . may convey to such church any real or personal estate belonging to it.*

Both the Society and the Church appointed committees to work together to investigate possibilities and to recommend action. In accordance with their recommendation, on March 11, 1889, the Church was legally incorporated as the "Trinitarian Congregational Church of Northfield".

*The purpose for which the Corporation is constituted is the establishment and maintenance of the public worship of God in accordance with the principles and doctrines of the Trinitarian Evangelical Congregational Churches of the United States.*

On March 31, 1889, the Trinitarian Society, or Parish, as it was then more commonly called, had its last recorded meeting and took the following action:

*Voted that the Parish convey all its property, both real and personal, to the Trinitarian Congregational Church.*

With this action, the Trinitarian Society ceased to exist. But the change was a mere formality, as the Society had long been an integral part of the Church.

A more noticeable change came when the students of Northfield and Mount Hermon Schools withdrew from the town church to attend churches of their own at the schools. Until now the Trinitarian Church had considered the two schools as being within its parish. The new church building had been constructed with an unusually large sanctuary for the express purpose of providing enough seating so that the students could worship with the townspeople. The schools had raised their share of the money for the building, and they regularly paid a part of the pastor's salary. The students made up a large part of the congregation each Sunday, helped greatly with the music, and their teachers held many of the church offices and served on many of its committees.

The people of the town were well aware of the great help the church received from the schools, and one church member wrote these words of appreciation:

*The Northfield Schools have contributed much to the welfare of this church. Back of the schools is the founder, D. L. Moody, except for whom the Society might still be worshipping as a small band of Christians in their first meeting house. These students, boys and girls, mingling each Sabbath with the resident church members, have had an untold influence on the growth of the spiritual life of the church.*

*We recall many services where the entire gallery would be filled with the students and professors of Mount Hermon; the students from the Seminary occupying the seats beneath the gallery. . . Often, when Mr. Moody conducted the services, which he did several times a year, he would call on the Hermon boys to sing a gospel song alone and the Seminary to join in the chorus, or he would ask the Seminary to sing one stanza and the boys another. He made everybody sing. Many of the students joined the church for the years they were here. Perhaps they contributed little to the material life of the church, but their very presence tends to keep the church at its best. . . They compose the morning choir and bring a vivifying influence upon the congregation. . .*

*Many members of the faculty have brought wise counsel and spiritual blessings as workers in the church life. These students who worship with us come from all parts of the world and through them we can help bring the gospel to every creature. . . Perhaps a large part of the enthusiasm for missions which the Society enjoys is through the many former members of these schools who are now in Home or Foreign Mission work.*

Much as the students were appreciated in the town church, their departure was doubtless inevitable. The distance of the schools from the church caused increasing difficulty with the increasing number of students. Mount Hermon was the first to break



away, the boys leaving to attend a church of their own when their chapel was completed in 1889. However, the ties were still close, as it was arranged that the pastor of the church would preach one Sunday each month at Mount Hermon.

Sage Chapel on the Northfield campus was completed in 1909, and it was contemplated that the girls would attend church there. The town church was much concerned and a committee was appointed to meet with a committee from the Seminary to discuss the matter. This committee issued the following communication:

*The members and friends of the Congregational Church would like to extend to the students and faculty of the Northfield Seminary a cordial invitation to meet with us again when they return to their work in September. Our church is large, and we all feel lost without them. We miss seeing their young faces and their help with the music. Our meeting together on Sunday morning is a link between the town and the school which we are sorry to have broken.*

The Seminary accepted the invitation, and for the next twenty years the girls continued to attend the town church. But in 1930 they finally withdrew to attend the school church in Sage Chapel.

The same year that the boys withdrew, the Northfield Church suffered a tragic loss when D. L. Moody died on December 22, 1899. The great of the world joined with Northfield in mourning his death. The Springfield Republican described his funeral as the most impressive service ever held in the church which Mr. Moody was largely responsible for building.

*The church was filled to overflowing with Mr. Moody's friends, and eulogies had been said. . .when out of the heavens which had been clouded during the afternoon, a sudden ray of light came through the upper window opposite the platform. Moving slowly as the sun descended, as if searching for its object, it passed close to the head of the casket and fell upon the face of the great evangelist. The ray of sunlight touched no other object; the face only was illumined; and then, as if its mission had been accomplished, the sun set behind the distant hill. "See", exclaimed Dr. Wilbur Chapman, "Heaven is giving its benediction in testimonial of the work of Mr. Moody".*

In his pastoral report for the year 1899, Dr. Scofield, then the minister of the Northfield Church, made this statement:

*The most notable event of the year as affecting us is the death of Dwight L. Moody just as the old year was closing. For more than twenty years this church has had the inestimable benefit of the influence and assistance of that great man of God, in her finance, in her building enterprise, and in her membership; and more than that this church has again and again, and often for considerable periods of time, enjoyed the personal ministrations of that mighty preacher. Furthermore, we owe it to Mr. Moody that our pulpit has been occupied by numbers of the most eminent ministers of the Gospel in all the world. No words can express the greatness of these services, nor of our loss in his death. But of far greater moment than our expressions of gratitude is that we shall realize what responsibility rests upon us, who have had for so many years these exalted privileges. We ought to be the holiest and the most zealous, and the most powerful church on this earth.*

## VII. A Wider Outreach. 1900–1975

At the time of Mr. Moody's death, the pastor of the Northfield Church was Dr. Cyrus I. Scofield, a nationally known preacher, lecturer, and writer, who came to Northfield because of Mr. Moody. He believed in a joyful, fervently evangelistic gospel, and he tried to encourage a like spirit in his more sober and sedate New England parishoners. In his pastoral report of 1901 he wrote:

*The Prayer Meeting has been called the thermometer of the church. The Pastor prefers to hope that our Prayer Meeting is not the thermometer of our Church. It cannot be that our mid-week gatherings in their apathy and joylessness represent the true spiritual state of our membership. It is small comfort to say that "still waters run deep". If the waters of our spirituality run so deep that their sounds are never heard, and so deep that they issue in no upspringing fountains of praise and prayer, then give me the brook which at least murmurs and sings on its way to the sea.*

In spite of differences in temperament between pastor and flock, he was regarded with affection and esteem, and there was general regret when, after seven years of service, he resigned in order to devote his full time to writing. He was then writing his best known work, "The Scofield Reference Bible", which is still in wide use throughout the English speaking world.

Because of the world-wide prestige of Mr. Moody, finding a minister for the Northfield Church was recognized as a matter of unusual importance. When Dr. Scofield resigned in 1903, a council of area churches was called to assist in finding his replacement. The Council issued the following statement:

*The Council discerns issues of unusual weight in this case. This church gathers and disperses religious forces felt throughout the world. Each year from all over the country, Christian strangers and many from other lands make it a Christian shrine. . . The pastor here is in a measure host to Christian pilgrims from half the world. Hence a change of pastorate touches wide circles in the Gospel Kingdom.*

In spite of wide publicity, the search for a new pastor ended right in the Northfield Church. N. Fay Smith, a teacher of Bible at Mount Hermon, was already a member and officer of the church. He was an ordained minister, and the Pastoral Committee rather belatedly realized that he was eminently qualified to serve the Northfield Church. The congregation agreed, and he was chosen as the next pastor. It was a happy choice. His pastorate, which lasted from 1903 until his death in 1914, was described as "a time of blessing and growth, as he led us, loving and being loved by all". An indication of the strength and activity of the church during this period is the fact that on May 5, 1907, ninety-three new members were received into the church. Numbers by themselves are not necessarily significant, but other items in the records indicate an unusually strong spirit of service in an increasing number of ways.

The pastor gave a good example of unselfish service when he argued against a church vote to raise his salary from \$2300 to \$2500. The church treasurer, Mr. Charles D. Robbins, was evidently equally dedicated for in the minutes is a resolution thanking him "for his self-denying services in saving the church records and funds from the fire in which his store, merchandise, furniture and personal effects were totally destroyed". Seven years later he was still treasurer, and was giving so much time that the church voted to pay him a salary. He refused, saying it was a labor of love for which he wanted no pay. He served as church treasurer for twenty-six years before finally retiring.



Another indication of a healthy church was the ending of the controversy between the Trinitarian and Unitarian churches. In 1908 Paul Moody accepted an invitation to preach in the Unitarian pulpit, an invitation that his father had refused a third of a century before. Some accused Paul of departing from the faith of his father, but he replied that if his father were still alive he would have changed also.

A new church activity during this period was the organization of the "Boys' Brigade". This was started in England, where it was felt that Sunday Schools were not meeting the needs of older boys. Its purpose was defined as:

*The advancement of Christ's Kingdom among boys and the promotion of habits of obedience, reverence, discipline, self-respect, and all that tends toward a true manliness.*

The idea was brought to Northfield by Henry Drummond, the great English preacher who was a frequent speaker at the Northfield summer conferences. One of the Brigade's leaders in Northfield was W. C. Roberts, who later became Superintendent at the National Bible Institute in New York City. The Brigade carried on an active program of Bible study, athletics, and camping, and attracted many boys who felt they were too old for Sunday School. The Brigade was later replaced by the Christian Endeavor.

The Trinitarian Church had never been parochial in its interests. It contributed generously to missionary work, both at home and abroad, and from it missionaries went out to Micronesia, Burma, India, China, Turkey, and the Philippines. World War I brought about a further widening of its interests and its outreach. In 1916, when word was received of the German deportation of people in Belgium, the Church passed and sent to President Wilson the following resolution:

*The Trinitarian Congregational Church of Northfield, Massachusetts, consisting of 825 members,. . . believing that we have an obligation under the articles of the second Hague Convention,. . . urge you to make such solemn protest as shall voice the opposition of the people of the United States to such deportation, not only of the people of Belgium, but also of the non-combatant peoples of all areas occupied by hostile armies.*

And in 1917 a resolution was passed urging President Wilson to use his influence to bring about world-wide prohibition during the war. This was followed the next year by a resolution approving the proposed prohibition amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Ambert Moody, a nephew of D. L. Moody, was sent to Boston to represent the Church at a hearing on the amendment.

Shortly before the Armistice, the pastor was granted a year's leave of absence to become Director of Religious Work in an army camp in the South. And a resolution was passed urging all church members to stop for a moment of prayer every day at noon "to remember our nation, our allies, and those who have been opposed to us in this struggle". The Church also approved of the plan proposed by the Governor of Massachusetts that churches throughout the state unite in community-wide patriotic services once a month, emphasizing a welcome home for those who had served in the army.

On January 26, 1919, the Northfield Church passed the following resolution:

*Being deeply grateful to Almighty God for the power which He has given to the Armies of the Allied Nations in upholding the cause of righteousness and peace, and believing that the time has come for the deepest desires and the unbroken efforts of our forefathers to realize the conditions of a guaranteed peace among the nations is near fulfillment, . . . We, pastor and congregation, express our approval of a League (of nations) as an instrument in establishing righteousness and maintaining peace throughout the world.*

The people in Northfield had been deeply moved by the suffering of the Armenian people in Turkey, and had contributed generously to funds for their relief. On November 2, 1919, at a specially called church meeting, the congregation passed unanimously a vote approving the Williams Resolution then before Congress, which "urged the sending of U. S. troops to the oppressed Armenians until their security from Turkish atrocities is secured".

This was the last of the war related resolutions, and the Church now turned its attention to the more usual round of church activities. In 1925, it celebrated a double anniversary, the one hundredth of the Trinitarian Congregational Church, and the fiftieth of D. L. Moody's return to Northfield to make this town his home and this church one of his major interests. Memories of Mr. Moody rightly played an important part in the celebration, for, as an article in Zion's Herald stated:

*The life of D. L. Moody cannot be told without including a part of the history of this church, neither can the story of the church's influence and service to the world be told with Mr. Moody left out. Although he retained membership in the church he joined while in Chicago, his life wove itself into the very fabric of the church at Northfield.*

The anniversary celebration paid tribute to the past with papers on the Church and on Mr. Moody, and with a display of old documents, pictures, newspaper clippings, and other items of historical interest.

With an eye to the future as well as to the past, a major feature of the double anniversary was a week of evangelistic meetings led by the Reverend Melvin Trotter of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Mr. Trotter was already well known and highly regarded by many of the townspeople, as for the past twenty years he had been a popular speaker at the summer conferences. He was a very unusual person.

*Mr. Trotter had been a ne'er-do-well in Chicago, and one night, completely discouraged, and slightly drunk, he was on his way to Lake Michigan to drown himself. He chanced to pass a city mission, and was literally pushed inside by a converted prize fighter. Although he slept through most of the sermon, in the after-meeting he caught a glimpse of the possibility of a different sort of life than he had been living. From that night on he lived a completely changed life, and was personally instrumental in opening city missions in the slums of sixty-seven cities.*

To the people of Northfield, inviting Mr. Trotter to hold evangelistic meetings as a part of the centennial celebration seemed a natural and appropriate thing to do. But it evidently seemed rather unusual to a reporter for the Boston Evening Transcript who wrote an article on "The Old Time Revival Spirit at Northfield".

*The fact that men and women of today do not shrink from making public confession of their allegiance to Jesus Christ and that the spirit of the old time evangelistic religion is not dead was evidenced at the services held at the Northfield Trinitarian Congregational Church, better known as the East Northfield Village Church, in connection with its recent centennial celebration. . . .*

*The committee in charge was not content simply to arrange a congratulatory program, or even one of merely historical or social interest, but in the spirit of Dwight L. Moody, who had been largely instrumental in building up the church to the point of its wide and deep influence during the past fifty years, it was decided that the greater part of the program should be planned with a forward look. To that end the evangelist, Reverend Melvin E. Trotter of Grand Rapids, Michigan, who has been called the "Bishop of City Missions in America" was secured to conduct a series of evangelistic meetings subsequent to the more formal anniversary exercises.*

These meetings were a very great success, with people coming as individuals and in groups from the immediate area and from as far away as Troy, New York, and Bellows Falls, Vermont. At some of the sessions over a thousand persons were in attendance. The meetings were given wide newspaper coverage, and were compared favorably with those led by Mr. Moody himself. There was high praise for the music provided by a choir of eighty students from the Northfield and Mount Hermon Schools led by I. J. Lawrence, and a choir of sixty voices from the town led by Philip Porter. One reporter closed his description with these words, "One of the best community meetings ever held in one of the best known churches in the Connecticut Valley".

The subject of Mr. Trotter's address on the closing day of the celebration was "After the Centenary, What?". He reminded his hearers that during the fervor of the Centenary



they had "mounted up on wings like eagles", but now they would have to learn "to walk and not faint". The leaders in the church were well aware that the interest in religion created by an evangelist is often short-lived because there is no follow-up. So they arranged for Miss Grace Saxe, at that time one of the best known Bible teachers in the country, to come to Northfield for the first week of the new year to give a series of talks on "How to Study the Bible". In another effort to keep alive the renewed interest in religion, the parish was divided into districts with two deacons assigned to each district. They were to keep in touch with every church member in their area, showing the concern of the church for them, and encouraging them to come to church. And for non-resident members, committees wrote to them inquiring as to their welfare, and urging them to unite with some church in their present place of residence.

Under the leadership of Miss Braley, a teacher in the town school, a "Go to Church Band" was organized. It continued for some years, and must have been very successful for in 1929 the pastor reported that for five months over seventy boys and girls had been present every Sunday. The increased attendance of young people from the town was especially welcome just at this time, as in 1930 the girls from the Northfield School withdrew to attend a church of their own on the campus. Mrs. Ambert Moody expressed the sentiments of the members of the church when she said:

*The church found itself much in the position of parents whose home has been blessed with sons and daughters who have gone out to form new homes, leaving the house too large and with an aching sense of loss.*

A side-light on the changing times is shown by the action taken in April, 1933, when it was voted to remove the horse sheds, as they had outlived their usefulness, and more parking space for cars was now needed.

During this period, the Annual Meeting became the most popular of all church gatherings. The ladies of the church served supper, at which time representatives from the Northfield and Mount Hermon Schools and from neighboring churches brought fraternal greetings. These meetings were very well attended, sometimes over three hundred people were crowded in at the supper tables.

At the Annual Meeting held on October 13, 1936, the following resolution was adopted:

*The Trinitarian Congregational Church, mindful of the approaching Centennial of the birth of Mr. D. L. Moody, and reviewing with most tender memories his outstanding service to our Church, . . . and realizing with growing conviction that in him the fellowship of our church possesses one of the greatest servants of the Master in all the history of Christianity, . . . we his co-workers hereby desire to record upon the minutes of the Annual Meeting our heartfelt interest and cooperation in a worthy observance of his anniversary.*

Although Mr. Moody had been dead for thirty-eight years, his memory was still very much alive, and thousands paid tribute to him in great gatherings in London, New York, Chicago, and in other cities and towns throughout America and the British Isles. The Northfield Church observed a Centennial Week, beginning with the Sunday morning service, at which Mr. Moody's son-in-law, Arthur P. Fitt, spoke on the subject "Moody Still Lives". There were meetings every night during the week, the Thursday meeting being a community service in the town hall, where hundreds gathered to honor the memory of "the town's most famous son".

Unfortunately, the unity of spirit prevailing during the Moody Centennial was soon to be broken by a controversy over the pastor, the Reverend Stanley Carne. One of the mysteries and tragedies in the history of any church is that equally sincere and dedicated Christians can differ so radically. Mr. Carne had many warm supporters, who felt that he was following in the tradition of Mr. Moody. Others felt that he was too conservative, and that he was overdoing the evangelistic approach, especially among the young people.

Feelings were aggravated by a controversy over the pastor's salary. At a church meeting on November 10, 1939, the members were asked to vote on whether to pay their pastor \$2400, \$2700, or \$3000. As \$3000 received more votes than either of the other two, though a minority of the votes cast, this was declared to be the salary the pastor would receive for the ensuing year. Many felt they had been tricked, and a considerable number declared they would neither attend church nor give financial support as long as Mr. Carne remained. Attendance and contributions decreased markedly, and at the end of the year the financial report showed a balance in the treasury of only thirty-one cents, and unpaid bills amounting to \$437.70. The Standing Committee then called a special meeting of the church to seek "a permanent cure for the ills of the church". In the call for the meeting, this statement was made:

*At a meeting of the Standing Committee, at which the pastor was present and in the chair, the unanimous opinion expressed was that the only hope of restoring unity in our membership and spiritual power in our church lies in the resignation of our pastor.*

At the special meeting, after much emotionally charged discussion, a motion that the pastor be asked to resign was defeated by one vote, seventy-seven to seventy-six. It was then voted that in view of the financial situation, all salaries be reduced by twenty per cent. In the following weeks, individuals and committees made an attempt to heal the rift in the congregation, but without success. The pastor realized that he was a stumbling block in the way of reconciliation, and in June he submitted his resignation to take effect at the end of the year. This was promptly accepted, and he was voted a leave of absence from August 1st till December 31st. Then began a bitter quarrel over what the salary should be during this five months leave. The pastor insisted that it should be on the basis of the \$3000 annual salary voted in January. The church was equally insistent that it must include the twenty percent cut voted in June.

Finally, the dispute was taken to the Franklin Association of Congregational Churches, which called an Ecclesiastical Council to settle the question. After a rather cursory examination, the Council voted that the two parties divide the difference between them. When the Northfield Church refused to do this, the Executive Committee of the Association took the unprecedented action of expelling from the Association the church which had been its best known member. It issued this strong statement:

*We express our deep humiliation caused by the disgrace which has been brought upon this Association by one of its member churches, and when the Trinitarian Congregational Church fulfills the agreement of the recommendation by the Council, then and only then will the Association accept her as a member in good and regular standing.*

The Association Executive Committee informed the pastor of this action, and suggested that he should "feel no compunction of conscience to resort to the medium of the law to collect the actual salary due him". However, further investigation indicated that the \$3000 salary was a unilateral vote of the church, and therefore the church had the legal right to reduce it unilaterally. The Scribe of the Association then wrote to the church; "In view of the evidence now submitted we retract our statement with regret".

After Mr. Carne's departure, earnest efforts were made to restore peace and harmony in the church. The feeling of the majority was expressed by this resolution:

*Whereas differences of opinion and feeling have existed and continue to exist in this church with regard to our late pastor. . . And whereas the connection of our late pastor with this church has been dissolved, and consequently the cause of the before mentioned differences of opinion and feeling removed, therefore: Resolved; That the time has come for the members of this Church to unite harmoniously, and not suffer honest and conscientious differences with regard to the past to prevent concert of action for the future.*

The church meeting of June 13, 1940, ended one controversy by accepting the resignation of the pastor, but it initiated another by appointing a committee "to consider



the future of the church building". This presented a problem which was to agitate the church for nearly a quarter of a century. The church had been built with a sanctuary seating over a thousand in order that the students in the Northfield and Mount Hermon Schools might worship with the people of the town. Now the students and teachers attended services in the campus chapels, and the church sanctuary was far too large for the average attendance of less than two hundred. Yet the building had hallowed associations which made it very dear to the hearts of many. Also, the task of raising the money needed for a new building seemed to many to be beyond the present ability of the congregation. So the question was discussed back and forth at many a gathering, seeking a consensus of opinion before initiating definite action.

A building problem of lesser importance was the lack of a parsonage, which was a handicap when the church sought a new minister. This was satisfactorily solved when Mr. and Mrs. Walter Hallam generously offered the church an unoccupied house on their property, if the church would move it to another site. The offer was gratefully accepted, and the house was moved to a lot near the church on Holton St. Fortunately, the newly acquired parsonage was ready to offer shelter to the Reverend Joseph Reeves and his family when they arrived in Northfield on January 1, 1945, in the midst of "a storm of sleet and snow".

In spite of its preoccupation with building problems, the church did not neglect its regular work and its wider services. In 1942 the Men's Brotherhood took the lead in constructing a skating rink on the lower part of the church property. The young people volunteered their services, the rink was made ready, and for a time it was a popular gathering place, so much so that the Brotherhood considered adding playing fields, swings, and other recreational facilities. But after a few years the enthusiasm waned, difficulties of upkeep increased, and the whole project was abandoned.

But recreation for young people was not neglected. In 1945 the congregation reversed a long standing practice by voting to permit the vestry to be used for social purposes, including dancing if desired.

And looking beyond parochial interests, in 1948 the church voted its approval of the proposed merger of the Congregational and Christian Churches. And in 1951 the church passed and sent to President Truman a resolution approving the sending of a U. S. ambassador to the Vatican.

Although the church did not neglect other responsibilities, the major topic of discussion during these years was as to whether or not to tear down the old building and build a new one. To reach a definite decision, a special church meeting was called for June 13, 1946. In spite of the importance of the question, only thirty-eight attended. A motion that the church proceed with the construction of a new building was passed by a vote of thirty-five to three. Many questioned whether it was right for so small a group to act for the whole church on so important a question. But the congregation had been properly notified of the special meeting, a legal quorum had been present, and the matter was considered to have been officially settled.

Committees were appointed and intensive money raising efforts were initiated. Under the strong and enthusiastic leadership of Mr. Reeves the members of the church, with great dedication and much sacrificial effort, canvassed for pledges and organized auctions, dinners, and sales of one sort and another. For the next fifteen years these activities were the major occupation of the church, outside its regular religious services. But in spite of all this effort, by 1961 the total amount given or pledged was only \$93,000, and by this time the estimated cost of the new structure had risen to over \$340,000. Feeling that raising this amount would be impossible, on September 26, 1961, the church very reluctantly, but by a large majority, voted to give up the idea of building "now or in the foreseeable future". The final abandonment of the new building project was a great regret to all concerned, and a few members left the church because of their disappointment.

Another unhappy result of the failure to build was that it brought about the resignation of Mr. Reeves after a very successful pastorate of seventeen years, the longest in the history of the Northfield Trinitarian Church.

The question now before the church was what to do with money which had been given specifically for a new church building, a balance of \$87,713 after paying architects' fees and other expenses. It was decided that the donors must be consulted and a committee was appointed for this purpose. A letter was sent to all donors, or if they were no longer living, to their heirs, explaining the situation and asking what they wished done with their gift. In accordance with the wishes indicated, \$22,760 was refunded; \$2,847 was deposited in a fund not to be used for twenty-five years for any other purpose than a new building; and \$62,106 was transferred to a General Building Fund to be used for the renovation, remodeling and upkeep of the present building.

The availability of a fund which could be used for renovation was a most fortunate circumstance at this particular time. For a number of years, the congregation had been looking forward to having a new building and little had been done about keeping the old building in proper shape. When the new building project was finally given up, attention was turned to much needed renovation and remodeling. In 1963 classrooms and a new wing were added with a Fellowship Hall on the main floor and a nursery room underneath. The ground floor of the old building was remodeled to provide church school rooms, a pastor's study, and a new kitchen. Renovations in the sanctuary were carried out year by year as money became available. Wall-to-wall carpeting, and new pews with a center aisle were installed, and walls and ceiling were repainted. With the refurbishing and refurnishing of parlor and library, and the installation of new chandeliers in the sanctuary in 1973, the major tasks of renovation were completed.

The newly renovated building not only provided more attractive and more satisfactory facilities for the regular work of the church, but it also enabled the church to make space available for community activities. When the Catholic Church was remodeling its first floor, its Sunday School used the Congregational school rooms. Conferences and public meetings of one sort and another are frequently held in Fellowship Hall. The Blood Bank uses the church rooms regularly, as do the Senior Citizens for two days a week, and the Child Development Program for four mornings a week. The latter two pay rent to help cover the cost of fuel, lighting, and janitor service.

The long cherished dream of having a new building had been brought to an end in 1961, and that same year marked the opening of a new page in the history of the Northfield Church. On May 25th, with only one dissenting vote, the congregation voted to join the newly organized United Church of Christ, which had been formed by the union of the Congregational Christian and Evangelical Reformed Churches. This uniting of forces was in conformity with the long held position of the Northfield Church as stated in its By-Laws:

*While affirming the liberty of our churches and the validity of our ministry, we believe in the unity and the universality of the Church of Christ, and will unite with its various branches in hearty cooperation; and will earnestly seek, so far as in us lies, that the prayer of our Lord for his disciples may be answered "That they all may be one".*

There is no thought of the churches in Northfield joining together in one church, but most of them share a belief in hearty cooperation. A committee representing most of the churches prepared a list of all town residents who were not members of any church, and called on them and invited them to attend some one of the town churches. Ministers from Northfield, Bernardston, and Warwick meet regularly to consider ways in which the churches can better serve the community. Ecumenical services are held on the World Day of Prayer, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and at Thanksgiving time. The Warwick Church and the Northfield Congregational Church had an especially close relationship during the years 1968 to 1971, when the Warwick Church was without a



minister. The minister of the Northfield Church, Mr. Philip Nelson, also served as pastor of the Warwick Church, being available for weddings, baptisms, and funerals. He preached in Warwick every Sunday in 1968 and twice a month for the next two years. For the other Sundays, a committee in the Northfield Church found someone to fill the Warwick pulpit.

The Northfield Church joined with churches throughout the country in facing the problem of racial justice, and on March 1, 1964, went on record against discrimination by voting that membership in the church would be open to all, regardless of race, color, or nationality, and that the church would consider "without reservation" the employment of members of any race or color as minister or other staff member.

The pastor is, of course, the key figure in the life of any church, but the services of the laity as officers, committee members, and in the various church organizations, are also vitally important. Next to the pastor, the deacons and the deaconesses bear the chief responsibility for nurturing the spiritual life of the church. In 1968 the previously separate boards were combined in one group called the Diaconate. The women share equally with the men in serving communion and in all the other duties of this body. One of these duties is to provide for the preaching when the minister is absent. Another is to carry the church to those who are unable to attend the services of worship. Tape recordings of the Sunday morning service, and a traveling communion set are available for this purpose, and the pulpit flowers are shared with those who are ill.

One of the important duties of the Diaconate is to administer the special collection taken every Communion Sunday, called the Deacons' Fund. This is used to help those who have suffered heavy losses due to fire, serious illness, or other disaster. For use in emergency cases the church has an inhalator, given as a memorial to Clifford Field, and a number of the church members have been trained in its use. For convalescents the church has wheel chairs, orthopedic walkers, crutches, canes, and hospital beds. These are available for anyone in the community who is in need.

The members of the Diaconate are largely concerned with adult needs. Other lay workers look after the interests of the young people. Their major task is the Sunday School which provides regular courses in Christian education for children from the kindergarten through the sixth grade. The Pilgrim Fellowship gives teen-agers religious training, an opportunity for service, and an active social program. Their services within the church include help with the Sunday School, child care during the church hour, and helping with coffee hours, the Christmas Bazar, and the Summer Fair. Outside the church, one of their projects was helping underprivileged children in Springfield, visiting them in their homes and entertaining them in Northfield. In 1969 the Pilgrim Fellowship "adopted" a fatherless family of twelve living in the Riverview Housing Project in Springfield, contributed to their support, and worked with the authorities to improve the condition of their housing. On the social side, the young people have numerous parties and picnics, and some years have taken trips to New York or Montreal, financed by various money raising projects planned and conducted by themselves.

For many years there were seven women's organizations in the church: Evening Auxiliary, Friendly Class, Ladies' Sewing Society, Mid-Week Bible Class, Mothers' Society, Women's Christian Temperance Union, and Women's Missionary Society. In order to coordinate more effectively all of the activities of the women of the church, in the 1950's the previously separate women's organizations were combined into one group, called the Women's Guild. Committees of the Guild carry out a varied program of services: monthly meetings for business, inspiration, information and fellowship; the oversight of kitchen and dining room equipment; wedding receptions, dinners, luncheons, and various other projects which are valuable services and also raise money for church needs at home and abroad. The Material Aid Committee has regular sewing sessions to make clothing for the needy. It also collects and distributes used clothing and bedding,

and provides materials so that refugee women in many lands can make their own clothing and teach their daughters how to sew.

The Men's Brotherhood, which is open to any man in the community, whether a member of the church or not, was started in 1917, when a Men's Bible Class decided to enlarge its membership and broaden its services. At first, monthly dues were charged to raise money to help people in the community who were in special need. This plan was discontinued in the 1940's, and now the only charge is to pay the cost of the refreshments served at the evening meetings, which are held six times a year. The programs are of various sorts, and have included music, pictures, exhibitions of magic and of glass blowing, and talks on topics of current interest.

A small library located in the church parlor plays its part in the educational, inspirational and recreational services of the church. At present it contains slightly over a thousand volumes, which number is being slowly but steadily increased either by gift or by purchase. Every Sunday after the morning service, members of the Library Committee are on hand to issue or receive books.

Although the Northfield Church has always been concerned about the application of religion to the problems of community life, it was not until 1966 that the By-Laws were amended to add to the regular church committees a Social Action Committee:

*To encourage church members to be informed and concerned about social problems and social needs, both in our community and in the Nation, and to recommend appropriate action to the Church.*

Some of the activities initiated by this committee have been week-end camps and "Fun in Snow" outings for under-privileged children from Springfield; suppers for students in the "Upward Bound" program at the Northfield School; forums on problems of public concern, such as Narcotics, Impeachment, the Middle East, and Alternate Sources of Energy. It also initiated in Northfield the community service program called "FISH" (Fellowship In Serving Him), and helped in promoting the opening of a Downeside Home in Greenfield, and continues to assist in supporting this Home.

With all of its interest in social service, the Northfield Church has always believed that its primary responsibility is for the things of the spirit rather than for the things of the body. The one who is most responsible for the spiritual health of the church is, of course, the pastor. The members' ideals for their pastor and for their church can be understood from this compilation of answers to the question "What are the qualities we want in our minister?"

*A man of deep faith who is able to communicate that faith both in his sermons and in his personal relationships.*

*A man with the character and personality to command our respect and stimulate and inspire us to give our best in cooperation and service.*

*A man with clear convictions, yet one who keeps an open mind.*

*A man who is neither too aggressive and authoritarian, nor too indecisive and unwilling to give real leadership.*

*A man who is neither extremely radical nor extremely conservative.*

*A man with emotional stability, able to put up with opposition, frustrations and disappointment; and who is able to accept criticism good naturedly and profit from it.*

*A man with initiative and imagination, tempered by good judgment and a cooperative spirit.*

*A man with a deep concern for the wider mission of the church in the community and the world, and who is able to work happily and effectively with other churches and organizations.*

*A man with a deep concern for the educational responsibilities of the church to children, youth, and adults.*



*A man with good health who is careful about his dress and appearance.*

*A man with a wife who will be an effective help-mate in the work of the church.*

When a member of the pastoral committee was asked if he really expected to find anyone who could live up to this standard, he replied, "Well, we can dream can't we?"

No matter how talented the minister, a strong church must also have the active participation of its lay members. To increase their interest and cooperation, in September, 1974, the Trinitarian Church conducted a "Workshop in Churchmanship". Some forty people spent a Friday evening and the better part of the Saturday sharing their ideas as to the successes, failures and needs of the church, and as to what should be its priorities. After much discussion, the work of the church was narrowed down to three basic activities. **Learning** — as we discover the will of God in increased knowledge and understanding of the whole story of our religion. **Living** — as we respond to what we have learned by changed lives. **Telling** — as we share our faith with others through our words and our deeds.

At the close of the Workshop, committees were formed to carry out some of the suggestions that had been made. One called on people listed as members who are not now attending church. Another organized an adult Bible Class, and a third initiated an entirely new venture, a "Scaffold Church, a temporary structure on which we stand while we build a permanent structure". This was planned for young adults not at present active in any church. The initial sessions were led by George Partridge, a retired teacher of science, on the topic "A Scientist Examines Religion". Just what the results of these efforts may be remains to be seen, but in any case, the Workshop was an imaginative step toward enlisting lay people in improving and enlarging the work of the church.

The Workshop reiterated the long-held position of the Northfield Trinitarian Congregational Church that the primary task of the church is to strengthen the spiritual life of its members. But it also emphasized the importance of applying our religion to the problems of personal and community life. This conviction was summarized by Desmond Chambers, the Moderator of the Church, in these words:

*Religion and the church itself is in a state of crisis in this country and perhaps the world, too. It is not uncommon to find churches split into factions, each wanting to go in a different direction. Simply stated, these directions may be described as "inward" and "outward". Which way do we here in Northfield want to go? This is a question that has confronted us this past year and will undoubtedly confront us in the years to come. I believe our present momentum is "outward", and rightly so.*

*There are many issues of national and world concern that we as Christians must recognize: population growth, world food supply, poverty, racial equality, morality, warfare, amnesty, and abortion, just to name a few. What do these problems have to do with us here in this church? Obviously, before we can make any judgment on these issues, we must acquaint ourselves with pertinent information. I believe our church should serve as a sounding board where we can gather and exchange ideas and ask questions about these issues, thereby helping each of us to decide in our own minds what is right. It is not the intent of this church to present programs of a social and political nature in order to sway its members to a certain position or frame of mind. But it is respectfully suggested that each of us avail ourselves of opportunities to learn more about these great and awesome issues. . .*

*We must accept differences of opinions and beliefs within our group. We must respect our neighbors' opinions. We must feel free to state our opinion before our fellow members without fear of animosity. In short, we must conform to our Christian beliefs. So I respectfully again ask that each of you get actively involved in these great issues as they arise and share your ideas with others. Remember, we must do everything within our power to keep our momentum going — outward!*

## EPILOGUE

The history of the Northfield Trinitarian Congregational Church is probably very similar to that of any small town church. Throughout its one hundred and fifty years it has continued to minister to the spiritual welfare of the community, with few out of the ordinary events, and with fewer changes than in the world around. Our world today is far different from that of our forefathers, but the church is very much the same. Of course, there have been changes in emphases and in terminology; the church is less rigid in its beliefs and less demanding of its members. Places of worship are more comfortable, and the services are fewer in number and shorter in length. But the fundamental purposes have remained very much the same.

A church, by its very nature, cannot change as much as do other institutions, for it ministers to man's deepest needs, and these are much the same "yesterday, today, and forever". Man's need for God is as old as man himself. In Egypt, on temple ruins dating back over 6000 years there is inscribed a prayer to the "Great God, Lord of Truth". The Ten Commandments given to man over 3000 years ago are still the basis of our moral code, and the way of life taught by Jesus nearly 2000 years ago is still the ideal toward which we strive. The nurture of these ideals is the purpose for which this church was founded, and will doubtless continue to be its purpose for generations to come.

Because the church deals with things of the spirit and with the daily round of man's life, its history, for the most part, will continue to be a rather prosaic chronicle, with heroic deeds and spectacular events few and far between. But it should not be forgotten that though "the little nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love" are not recorded in history, they make up the better part of the life of any church.

### ARTICLES OF FAITH ADOPTED BY THE CHURCH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN NORTHFIELD, DENOMINATED TRINITARIAN. (November, 1825)

- I We believe in the existence of one God, the Creator, preserver, and moral Governor of the universe; a being of infinite power, knowledge, wisdom, justice, goodness and truth; the self-existent, independent, and immutable fountain of good.
- II We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the inspired word of God, and are our only perfect and unerring standard of religious belief and practice.
- III We believe that the mode of divine existence is such as lays a foundation for a distinction into three persons, — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that these three are one in essence, and equal in power and glory.



- IV We believe that God has made all things for himself; and that known unto him are all his works from the beginning; and that he governs all things according to the counsel of his own will.
- V We believe that the divine law and the administration of the divine government, are perfectly holy, just, and good; and that all rational beings are bound to approve of them as such.
- VI We believe that God created man with a holy nature; that in consequence of his disobeying the command of God his created nature became sinful; and that all the posterity of Adam partake of his sinful nature, and come into the world in such a state, that without the special interposition of divine grace, they must forever perish.
- VII We believe that Jesus Christ uniting in his nature God and man, has by his perfect obedience and meritorious sufferings honoured the divine law, and made a complete atonement for the sins of the world; so that God can be just in granting salvation to men for his sake.
- VIII We believe that although the invitations of the gospel are such, that whosoever will may take of the water of life freely, yet the depravity of the human heart is such that no one will come to Christ, except the father, by the special and efficacious influence of his spirit, draw him.
- IX We believe that those who are saved, are effectually called to life by regeneration, a work of the Holy Spirit on the heart.
- X We believe that those who cordially embrace Christ, although they may be left to fall into sin, never will be left finally to fall away and perish but will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.
- XI We believe that watchfulness over the life, holy meditation, a conscientious attention upon public, family and secret worship, together with a steady practice of righteousness, truth, sincerity, and charity towards men, and of sobriety, chastity, and temperance towards ourselves are the indispensable duties of every christian.
- XII We believe that there will be a general resurrection of the bodies both of the just and the unjust.
- XIII We believe that all mankind must one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive a just and final sentence of retribution according to the deeds done in the body; and that at that day of judgment the state of all will be unalterably fixed; and that the happiness of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked will be endless.
- XIV We believe that Christ has a church in the world, into which none in the sight of God, but real believers, and none in the sight of man, but visible believers have right to enter.
- XV We believe that the sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's supper; that believers in regular church standing only can consistently partake of the Lord's supper; and that visible believers and their households only, can consistently be admitted to the ordinance of baptism.

## FORM OF COVENANT

You do now in the presence of God and man, avouch the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be your God, the supreme object of your affections, and your chosen portion forever. You cordially acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ in all his meditorial offices, Prophet, Priest, and King as your Sanctifier, Comforter and guide. You humbly and cheerfully devote yourself to God in the everlasting covenant of grace. You consecrate all your faculties and powers to his service and glory; and you promise to take the Holy Scriptures as the rule of your life and conversation: and that thro the assistance of his Spirit and grace, you will cleave to him as your chief good; that you will give diligent attention to his word and ordinances, to family and secret prayer, and to the observance of the Sabbath; that you will seek the honor of his name, and the interest of his kingdom; and that henceforth, denying all ungodliness and every worldly lust, you will live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world. You do now cordially unite yourself to this as a Church of Christ, promising to submit to its discipline, so far as conformable to the rules of the gospel; and solemnly engage to be faithful to it, and to seek the interest, happiness, and reputation of all its member.

Thus you solemnly covenant, promise and engage.

The Form of Covenant and the Articles of Faith here printed, were publicly subscribed to by the following thirty persons on November 30, 1825.

|                         |  |                              |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| <i>Elisha Lyman</i>     | <i>Sharon Field</i>                        | <i>John Long</i>             |
| <i>Rhodolphas Lyman</i> | <i>Phinehas Field, Jr.</i>                 | <i>Elisha Alexander, Jr.</i> |
| <i>Phebe Field</i>      | <i>Eunice Field</i>                        | <i>Sarah Lyman</i>           |
| <i>Roxana Prior</i>     | <i>Mehetabel Alexander</i>                 | <i>Mary Dutton</i>           |
| <i>Elizabeth Field</i>  | <i>Bethiah Lyman</i>                       | <i>Abigail Lyman</i>         |
| <i>Fanny Darling</i>    | <i>Cynthia Janes</i>                       | <i>Fanny Barber</i>          |
| <i>Cynthia Lyman</i>    | <i>Thirza Dickinson</i>                    | <i>Azubah Dickinson</i>      |
| <i>Mary Prior</i>       | <i>Sally Smead</i>                         | <i>Rachel Lyman</i>          |
| <i>Fanny Alexander</i>  | <i>Mira Alexander</i>                      | <i>Sarah Alexander</i>       |
| <i>Mary Field</i>       | <i>Mary E. Williams</i>                    | <i>Penelope Mattoon</i>      |
|                         | <i>Attest, Phinehas Field, Jr., Scribe</i> |                              |



**STATEMENT OF FAITH OF THE TRINITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
(UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST), NORTHFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS.  
(1973 Revision of the By-Laws)**

Our Statement of Faith is that statement approved by the Second General Synod of the United Church of Christ held in Oberlin, Ohio, July 5-9, 1959.

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We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father, and to his deeds we testify:

He calls the worlds into being, creates man in his own image and sets before him the ways of life and death.

He seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

He judges men and nations by his righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, he has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to himself.

He bestows upon us his Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the Church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.

He calls us into his Church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be his servants in the service of men, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

He promises to all who trust him forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, his presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in his kingdom which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto him. Amen

**THE COVENANT OF MEMBERSHIP (To be recited by the new members)**

I am a part of this Church; one among many, but I am one. I need the Church for the development of the spiritual life within me; the Church in turn needs me. The Church may be human in its organization, but it is divine in its purpose. That purpose is to point me to God.

Participating in the privileges of the Church, I will also share in its responsibilities, taking it upon myself to carry my fair share of the load, not grudgingly but joyfully. To the extent that I fail in my responsibilities, the Church fails; to the extent that I succeed, the Church succeeds. I will volunteer, saying: "Here am I, send me!", I will be loyal in my attendance, generous in my giving, kind in my criticism, creative in my suggestions, loving in my attitudes. I will give to my Church my interest, my enthusiasm, my devotion — most of all myself.

I covenant with this Church to strive for its purity, peace and prosperity, and according to my abilities to support its enterprises, engage in its work, and with it seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness as revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus.

## MINISTERS IN THE NORTHFIELD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

### I. In the Parent Church

|           |             |  |
|-----------|-------------|--|
| 1673-1675 | (2 years)   | William Janes, Lay Leader<br>Former elder and teacher in the church in Northampton   |
| 1675-1685 |             | Northfield abandoned   |
| 1685-1688 |             | No minister  |
| 1688-1689 | (6 months)  | Warham Mather<br>Of the family of famous Puritan preachers   |
| 1690-1714 |             | Northfield abandoned for the second time   |
| 1714-1716 |             | "The people were too nearly like heathen in having no minister of the gospel".   |
| 1716-1717 | (6 months)  | James Whitmore, Yale 1714  |
| 1717-1749 | (32 years)  | Benjamin Doolittle, Yale 1716<br>Minister, physician and surgeon   |
| 1749      | (6 months)  | Isaac Lyman, Yale 1747<br>After a trial period, he was offered the post, but declined.   |
| 1750-1794 | (44½ years) | John Hubbard, Yale 1747<br>The longest pastorate in Northfield's history   |
| 1795-1798 | (3 years)   | Samuel Clesson Allen, Dartmouth 1794<br>After leaving Northfield, Mr. Allen had a distinguished career as professor, lawyer, and legislator.   |
| 1799-1825 | (26 years)  | Thomas Mason, Harvard 1796<br>His turning to Unitarianism caused the Orthodox Congregationalists to leave his church. He served for five more years in the church which became the Unitarian Church. |

### II. In the Trinitarian Congregational Church

|           |             |  |
|-----------|-------------|--|
| 1826-1830 | (4 years)   | Eli Moody, Middlebury M.A. 1820<br>Studied for the ministry with the Rev. Perkins in East Amherst. "Of the same valley stock as the Northfield Moody". |
| 1831-1836 | (5 years)   | Bancroft Fowler, Yale 1796, Williams M.A. 1800<br>Later became a professor at Bangor Seminary  |
| 1836-1840 | (4 years)   | Horatio Lombard, Williams 1815<br>Later became chaplain in a county jail   |
| 1840-1842 | (2 years)   | Nathaniel Richardson, Amherst 1836<br>Resigned after a quarrel with the church   |
| 1843-1844 |             | No minister recorded from October 4, 1842 to November 20, 1844   |
| 1844-1845 | (4½ months) | Luther Farnham, Dartmouth 1837, Andover 1841   |



|           |             |  |
|-----------|-------------|--|
| 1846-1850 | (4½ years)  | Willard Jones, Dartmouth 1835, Andover, Lane Seminary 1838<br>Served a term as a missionary in Persia. Studied under Pres. Rira Pierce   |
| 1851      |             | No minister  |
| 1852      |             | Charles E. Bruce, "Stated Supply"  |
| 1853      |             | No minister  |
| 1854      |             | Daniel O. Frost, "Stated Supply"   |
| 1855      |             | No minister  |
| 1856      |             | Daniel O. Frost, "Stated Supply"   |
| 1857-1858 |             | No minister  |
| 1859-1861 | (2 years)   | Willard Jones<br>He returned to Northfield from a pastorate in Central Falls, R. I.  |
| 1862-1865 | (3 years)   | Isaac Perry, Ipswich Academy, Private study for the ministry. Acting Minister  |
| 1865-1880 | (15 years)  | Theodore J. Clark, Williams 1836, Andover 1841<br>"The sainted but quiet leader"   |
| 1880-1887 | (6 years)   | Ellis R. Drake<br>A youthful and active man who considered the Church as an adjunct to the Northfield Schools. He married Dr. Emma Angell, Principal of the Seminary.  |
| 1887-1889 |             | Theodore J. Clark, Pastor pro tem.<br>(Pastor of Bernardston Church)   |
| 1889-1894 | (5 years)   | Silas P. Cook<br>He married the Assistant Principal of the Seminary.   |
| 1894-1896 | (2 years)   | H. B. Hartzler (Later became Bishop of United Evangelical Church)<br>An editor and writer as well as a minister. In 1889 he became Bible Teacher and Chaplain at the Northfield Schools. In 1893 he was with Mr. Moody at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and wrote a book describing those meetings. |
| 1896-1903 | (7 years)   | Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, D.D.<br>Editor of the widely used "Scofield Reference Bible". He was one of the numerous well-known religious leaders who were attracted to Northfield because of Mr. Moody.  |
| 1903-1914 | (11 years)  | Nelson Fay Smith, Moody Bible Institute 1892<br>He assisted Mr. Moody in his work with soldiers during the Spanish-American War (1898), and was brought to Northfield by Mr. Moody to teach Bible at Mt. Hermon. He was an active worker in the Northfield Church, and was moderator when elected pastor.  |
| 1915-1931 | (15½ years) | Francis Wayland Pattison<br>He came from London, England, where he had been assistant to Campbell Morgan.  |
| 1931-1932 |             | Wm. W. Coe, Interim Minister<br>First publisher of the Northfield newspaper  |

|           |            |   |
|-----------|------------|---|
| 1932-1941 | (9 years)  | W. Stanley Carne, Bangor Theological Seminary<br>He was the cause of a serious controversy in the church and resigned.  |
| 1941-1944 | (3 years)  | Edward C. Dahl, Yale School of Religion 1941  |
| 1945-1962 | (17 years) | Joseph W. Reeves, Asbury College, 1923, Boston Univ. School of Theology, 1927<br>The longest pastorate in the history of the Trinitarian Congregational Church.               |
| 1962      |            | Bruce Morgan, Interim Minister<br>Professor at Amherst College  |
| 1962-1967 | (5 years)  | Jerome Wood, Springfield College 1956, Andover Newton 1960  |
| 1967      |            | Bruce Morgan, Interim Minister  |
| 1967-     |            | Philip N. Nelson, Tusculum College 1943, Columbia M.A. 1947, Andover Newton 1968<br>He served in the Navy and was in business for fifteen years before entering the ministry. |



## SOURCE MATERIALS

### BOOKS:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Edmund S. Morgan        | Visible Saints. The History of the Puritan Idea       |
| Samuel Eliot Morrison   | The Story of the Old Colony of New Plymouth           |
| J. M. (Joel Munsell)    | Reminiscences of Men and Things in Northfield         |
| Theophilus Packard, Jr. | Churches and Ministers of Franklin Association (1854) |
| Herbert G. Parsons      | A Puritan Outpost                                     |
| Temple and Sheldon      | History of Northfield                                 |
| George Temple           | History of Deerfield                                  |

### HISTORICAL PAPERS:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Mrs. A. M. D. Alexander | Seventy-five Years of History (1913)                                  |
| Miss Carrie B. Barber   | Building the New Church<br>The Northfield Church and D. L. Moody      |
| Dr. Gordon M. Day       | "Squakheag"   |
| Arthur P. Fitt          | The Second Fifty Years of the Church (1875-1925)                      |
| Mrs. Charles Hogen      | Century and a Quarter of the Trinitarian Congregational Church (1951) |
| Anna M. Mitchell        | Old Days and New in Northfield (New England Magazine, August 1897)    |
| Mrs. Ambert G. Moody    | The One Hundred Twenty-Fifth Anniversary (1951)                       |
| Horace H. Morse         | The First Fifty Years of the Church (1825-1875)                       |
| Chas. Calvin Stearns    | The First Parish Church of Northfield (1945)                          |
| Daniel Wm. Weck         | The Disestablishment in Massachusetts                                 |

### NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE CLIPPINGS NORTHFIELD HISTORICAL RECORDS

First Parish Papers  
Letters  
Town Meeting Minutes  
Trinitarian Congregational Church Minutes and Documents  
Trinitarian Society Minutes and Documents







